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THE ORDINARY MAN'S INDIA



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THE ORDINARY MAN'S INDIA

BY

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is not to attempt an historical review of India, nor yet to enter into any lengthy dissertation on the political problems of the country.

No book, however, which professed to describe the India of to-day, or any aspects of its European life, would be complete were the Reforms not mentioned. Accordingly I have touched on them here, but from the standpoint of the non-official European.

The outlook of the official European has often been put before the public by distinguished soldiers and Civil Servants, but the point of view of European non-officials, who form no inconsiderable proportion of the European community in India, is not sufficiently well known.

Certain fallacies, too, exist in the minds of many who have never visited India as to the conditions of European life in the country to-day. Many people at home have some link with India ; public interest in the country is deep and widespread.

I have had this fact in mind, and aimed at dealing with aspects of European thought and everyday life in the country, in the belief that such information about India will make a popular appeal if dealt with in as interesting, clear and simple a way as possible.

A. CLAUDE BROWN.

June 1927.



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THE ORDINARY MAN'S INDIA

CHAPTER I

Questions and Answers on India—The Outward Journey—General
Outfit—Indian Tailors—Currency

ENGLAND is full of strange notions about India. According to some, the European community there consists in the main of soldiers, Civil Servants, tea-planters, slippered pantaloons and slave-drivers.

It is dimly realized that there also are many non-official European residents engaged in some business or other, but their lives, their work, their social position, their political views are wrapped in mystery. I am often asked questions about India like these :

“ Which is the best way to go ? ”

“ What is the climate really like ? ”

“ What sort of outfit should I take with me ? ”

“ Is it safe for Europeans out there now ? ”

“ What about the Reforms ? ”

“ What is non-official life in India really like ? ”

Many people have friends in the country, but that does not always mean that letters are stuffed full of the information which their recipients at home crave for. Indian life is not conducive to the writing of long and intimate letters.

I will deal with some of these questions in the first few pages.

It was during the war that I first went to India. The Cunard liner *Caronia*, converted for the time being into a transport, took some five thousand of us to Bombay. The ship was one of a great convoy which proceeded via



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Sierra Leone, Cape Town and Durban. From thence our ship proceeded alone, and we arrived at Bombay exactly two months after leaving Devonport. After a brief stay in that city I was ordered to proceed to Mesopotamia. Three years later I visited India again, this time to stay for six years.

My recent return to England was made in a British-India liner, of small dimensions, and the only one of its class which survived submarine attack during the war. The voyage from Calcutta to Tilbury took a good five weeks. The passengers on board were of much less account than the cargo stored below, and, as many of the bunkers were filled with merchandise, it was necessary to coal on four different occasions during the voyage. It was a slow and uncomfortable trip.

If the matter of choice be left to the man who is going to India for the first time, I recommend him to travel as far as Colombo by one of the steamships of the Bibby Line; these provide for first-class only.

From Colombo the steamer proceeds direct to Rangoon, so all passengers for Southern India must disembark and proceed thenceforth by ferry and rail. But if Bombay or Calcutta is nearer your destination, you must tranship at Colombo to a boat bound for one of these ports.

The question of outfit is one of the first which arises in the intending traveller's mind.

"What sort of trunks shall I take?"

"What kind of clothes are necessary for India?"

"What about a pith helmet?"

I use the words "pith helmet" for the first and last time in this book. Henceforth it is called a *topi*, and the best kind are to be bought in India itself. Still, as you will need one as soon as you reach Port Said, you had better purchase one in London, for the kinds you get at Port Said are monstrosities, which brand the wearer as a new arrival. Moreover, they are quickly discarded as soon as the real article is seen.

Try to buy a *topi* which is light, yet thick in substance,



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and covered with thin white or grey-blue cloth. Its *pugaree* should be of the same colour and neatly bound ready in position. The *topi* should shade the eyes and the brim curve downwards, protruding twice as far at the back as at the front, so as to cast a wide shade over the nape of the neck.

Personally I favour what is known as the Curzon *topi*. It is practically identical to the one described, and should be obtainable in London. But if you cannot find one of this sort on no account buy one of the beehive variety, khaki-coloured and having a quilted crown. Rather than that invest in one of the resplendent sun-helmets which are so freely shown in hatters' windows. But get one which is light, and as unlike a military helmet as possible. For the latter kind is expensive, heavy, and quite unsuitable for civilian wear in India, save maybe during the rains.

A *topi* purchased in India costs but a few shillings, and it is preferable to buy such a one at frequent intervals than invest in an expensive affair which will soon look shabby but never really wears out.

Then as to trunks. The steel trunk, if a really strong one with edges which will not burst open the first time it is dropped on end, is very useful. It is comparatively insect-proof, as long as the strips of cork round its inside edges last. Such a trunk will be found very useful on shipboard, for it slips easily under a bunk.

But if you want something in addition, which will hold a lot and be a sort of store-chest for you in the years to come, try to obtain a large wooden box made of thick hard teak, and lined throughout with aluminium. Its lid must fit closely and its corners should be bound with strong metal. This sort of box will defy the ravages of white ants—teak being the only sort of wood they cannot destroy—and it will be practically airtight. The metal-tipped corners are a necessary protection, if you wish the box to survive the severe handling it will receive on many future occasions.



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A good leather handbag is always useful ; preferably the sort which folds up when required, and can be stowed away in your steel trunk when not wanted. On your train journeys in India, something to hold a change of linen and your night things, shaving kit, etc., will be necessary, for distances are great and the trains very dirty.

The kind of bag I mean will last for years. I had one right through my Eastern travels and it is still going strong.

The question of clothing depends for an answer a good deal as to which part of India you are travelling. For all climates are to be found in this vast continent.

Thus, Bombay has no cold weather at all ; Calcutta boasts two months during which you need a greatcoat when driving at night ; Simla provides plenty of cold, and there, as well as in Cashmere, Mussoorie, and Darjeeling, ordinary English clothing is wanted all the year round.

Your ordinary washing suits will be best obtained in India. They are very cheap there, and as you need a clean suit every day the question of price is a consideration.

My advice is to have a couple of thin suits made at home from what is called " tropical tweed." These will be useful the latter part of the voyage out, and will see you through the first few days after arrival. By that time some of your thin washing suits will be ready ; a smart Indian tailor will make them for you very quickly indeed. I have ordered some thin army tunics early one morning and worn them the evening of the following day.

As to dress clothes. Your ordinary evening dress will serve, provided it is made of not too thick a cloth. Get in addition a dinner-jacket, which will be worn on all but the most formal occasions. Men wear white dinner-clothes a lot in India ; these can be made out there, but custom varies much and in Bombay black dress-clothes are considered *de rigueur*, while in Calcutta you may wear black or white, or a mixture of both—black coat and white trousers.

People at home have grown careless in the matter of



evening clothes, but in India men change every evening as a matter of course, and when thus attired hats are seldom worn.

Shoes with crêpe-rubber soles will be excellent for wear on board ship, also on shore, save in the rains, when it is common knowledge crêpe-rubber soles are unsatisfactory.

Of course you play tennis! Even those who do not play in England will want to when in India. Take out a tennis racket of the sort which has steel strings. Gut strings perish very quickly in the alternate heat and damp of the plains.

If you golf, take your clubs with you; there are excellent golf-courses in most parts of India, and almost everybody plays.

Do *not* buy a cholera belt. They are nasty uncomfortable things, productive of prickly heat, and in my opinion quite unnecessary.

For underclothing I strongly advise the wearing of open-mesh material. Some fellows wear no underclothes at all in the hot weather. This I think an uncleanly and mistaken procedure, for the flapping of a damp, thin, cotton shirt on your back is both unpleasant and unhealthy. Take some changes of thick underwear also; in the cold weather it will be found both grateful and comforting. Conditions are so different that a temperature which in England you would consider hardly noticeably cold will in India make you very cold indeed.

Women who need a guide as to what clothes to take with them cannot go far wrong. If they imagine what a really hot day is like during those rare occasions when a short heat-wave visits this country they will understand that the clothes they wear on those unusual occasions at home are the sort of clothes they will have to wear during all the hot weather in India.

Pretty evening frocks are expensive in the cities of the East, so take all you can with you, and the same applies to shoes.

But warm clothing too will be wanted. That fur coat



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will be necessary on the voyage out; and it will surely see service at some hill station on more than one occasion before you return to England.

Cotton frocks can be obtained very cheaply if you employ the local *durzee*, as the Indian tailor is called. He cannot initiate, but is a master of imitation. You have but to give him an old frock and purchase the material you wish to have made up; he will do the rest, and turn you out an exact copy of the pattern. Moreover, he will do it sitting outside on your verandah while you wait.

Take your sunshades with you by all means, and all your hats. Some European women wear *topis*, some do not. They are uncomfortable and ugly, but safe—which probably explains why they are so little worn by the fair sex. But, it seems to me, in these days when a woman has wilfully deprived herself of most of her natural head-covering, the wearing of a *topi* of some sort is indicated. A wide-brimmed, thick felt hat is a useful substitute.

Leave your umbrella at home. Indians carry umbrellas as a sign of respectability and to keep off the sun; that is about all they will keep off, for when it rains in India it will take something more than an umbrella to keep you dry. A silk oilskin, and a sou'wester to match, might be useful if you are going to live up-country; but in the cities taxis are plentiful, and your husband's car, or somebody else's husband's car, will always be at your disposal. European women who live in India use their feet chiefly for running to and fro on tennis courts, or when dancing, on the many occasions which a comparatively easy life affords them.

For the woman who is keen on sport, and has a cheerful happy-go-lucky disposition, and is not too seriously minded, the larger cities of India can be very pleasant places.

The question of money will crop up immediately on landing, so, for the benefit of the newcomer, a brief explanation of the currency of the country will be useful.



It is chiefly paper and silver in these days. There are notes for Rs1000, rarely seen, while Rs100 notes are much more common. Rs50 notes are in circulation, but are not much in evidence, for they are most unpopular, resembling much too closely those of the favourite denomination of Rs10. Notes for Rs5 are common, and considerably smaller in size than those previously mentioned. But the smallest of all are the R1 notes, and these are shunned like the plague, which their dirty, worn appearance only too often suggests. There is no gold coinage now, and the largest silver coin is the rupee, about the size of our own two-shilling piece, and popularly known as the "chip." Next in size and value is the 8 anna piece, the size of our own shilling. The 4 anna piece is made in two varieties—one closely resembles our sixpence and the other is a purely nickel coin, rather larger in size, and of a squarish shape, with wavy edges.

The copper coin most in evidence is the anna, rather smaller and thinner than our penny. Then there are pice, which look like farthings and are worth a quarter of an anna each. The coin of lowest value is the pie, twelve of which go to make up one pice. I have heard of these coins but never seen them used as currency.

Roughly speaking, the copper coins are used only by Indians, for their purchasing power is very small and they are dirty and difficult to handle. You will find the notes considerably larger than our own paper currency, and in a much worse state of preservation as a rule.

The purchasing power of a Rs10 note works out about the same as ten shillings at home, so that if you reckon each Rs10 note to be a ten-shilling note you won't be far-out in your calculation of values.

It is a mistake to buy quantities of fancy goods immediately the boat gets in. Wait a little and look round, for you will find the vendors nearest the docks the most expensive. It is their business to catch the newcomer. And, if you are going up-country, wait till you get there before spending much money; the value



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you will receive amply repays the extra strain on your patience.

You will find many caste prejudices amongst Indians, but the European community has its own peculiar ideas also, and it may be as well to consider these before going any farther.



CHAPTER II

European Caste Prejudices and Conventions—Snobbery and the “Country-born”

IN England nowadays we contrast the prosperity of the new rich with the plight of the new poor; we applaud the very natural desire to go into business, and do something practical to earn a livelihood.

Old prejudices against being engaged in trade have long since passed away, never to return. We take all this for granted, and the rising generation can hardly believe matters ever were otherwise.

But a short residence in India will show any sceptical youngster that these prejudices, which we thought were dead and buried long since, are there very much alive, and more active to-day than they were in England two generations ago.

India is the paradise of the middle classes and the land of snobs.

It is not easy for the new arrival to understand, much less accustom himself to, the rigid lines of demarcation which divide Europeans living in the country.

First there is the Indian Civil Service (the Heaven-born, as they are sometimes irreverently called), those gentlemen who are entitled to place after their names the magic letters I.C.S. Members of this service, after serving a necessary apprenticeship as assistants, are eligible to become District Magistrates, Collectors, Presidency Magistrates, Judges of the High Court, Residents, and Secretaries to Government, etc.

Then, perhaps, I should mention the Royal Indian Marine; but it is a very small service in these days, though, under a projected scheme of reconstruction, there is promise of its ancient glories being revived.



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Next come officers of the British and Indian armies.

Then there are innumerable covenanted Government servants—such as the members of the Indian Education Service, officers of the Indian Police, members of the Pilot service, State Railway Officers, Forest Officers, senior Post and Telegraph officials, Public Works Department officials, etc.

All these have covenants with the Secretary of State for India which ensure to them security of tenure, fixed rates of pay, regular leave, and a pension on retirement. Members of these covenanted services, whether European or Indian, are recruited from England.

There is also an uncovenanted Government Service, which is recruited in India, and staffs the less remunerative positions in other departments.

This list is by no means a complete one, but is long enough to prove a sufficient guide for the use of the non-official European who is going out to India for the first time. What more intimately concerns him is to discover into which category, "Mercantile" or "Trades," he will fall. Roughly speaking, India regards these words "Mercantile" and "Trades" to be synonymous with the terms "Wholesale" and "Retail." For the purposes of class distinction, professional men come under the heading "Mercantile."

The "Mercantile" man is one who is engaged in an office or business, either as a principal or employee, which does a strictly wholesale business. Exceptions are made in the case of banks, insurance offices, etc. The "Trades" man is one who is engaged in any retail business, either as a principal or employee.

It sounds very elementary, I know, but it is necessary to lay down these meanings for, strange as it may seem in these democratic times, these definitions determine a man's social standing every hour of the day. Let me give an example which will bring the matter home, quite simply and clearly.

A friend of mine, who was an importer of oils of various



kinds, and had quite a small office and a very moderate income, was discussing this matter of caste prejudices with me in Calcutta.

He instanced Mr X, and went on to explain that, although the two were quite good friends and did business together, he was of course quite unable to ask X to dinner because he was "Trades."

This notwithstanding the fact that X was a Public School boy, a good fellow in every way, and owned a large workshop and one of the best motor businesses in the country.

Here is another case, an even more glaring one.

The principal partner in a large firm, which has fine stores in most of the big Eastern cities, visited India and came to Calcutta. His shops were not petty concerns but large establishments, as important in their own cities as are Harrods or Selfridges in London.

Remaining some time in the country, he wished to join a golf club. There are three excellent golf clubs in Calcutta, all reserved for the mercantile community. He was taken round one of them as a guest, but discovered the impossibility of becoming a member.

He was "Trades." The additional fact that he chanced to be an ex-Member of Parliament, and a knight into the bargain, made not the least difference to his position as long as he remained in India.

In England we are so accustomed to hear of Lady Y opening a hat shop, or of Lord Z becoming a motor salesman, that this objection to any sort of shopkeeping from a social standpoint is almost incredible. Yet such is the case in India. People engaged in retail trade are not considered to be socially the equal of their mercantile countrymen.

One's occupation, not one's birth, breeding, education, or even financial standing, determines one's place in the Indian scheme of things. The small wholesaler, who has a little office in a back street, the clerk in a bank or warehouse, the veriest junior in a wholesale house, suffers no



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such handicap. The hall-mark "Mercantile" covers a very multitude of indiscretions.

The comedy usually first shows itself to the newcomer when his ship approaches India. Passengers booked the same class have had a jolly time together throughout the voyage; everyone has been on the most friendly terms. But, with the journey's end in sight, class distinctions become apparent, for by now everybody knows something of everybody else's business. The Government crowd stick more tightly together; the Mercantile close their ranks, and the unfortunate new arrival, if he should be going out to join some trade firm or other, finds himself dropped like a hot coal.

The club life of India is a very important factor in the life of every European there, for little or no home life as it is understood in England exists in India. Your games, your reading of the home papers, your friendly intercourse, all these and much more are procurable at your club, and nowhere else.

The ordinary clubs being barred to the "Trades" they took the matter into their own hands and started clubs for themselves, and manage to rub along quite comfortably too. But their social ostracism rankles, and many Europeans who are not of them sympathize with them. By degrees these European caste prejudices will be broken down, but they exist at present, and the newcomer to India must be prepared for them.

Not that the "Trades" have a bad time in these days. They often have better living accommodation and more money than the "Mercantile" community. They own motor-cars and race their own race-horses, though at the gymkhana meetings they may not ride them. They may join the Rotary Luncheon Club, and the European Association, which is a truly democratic affair, welcomes them with open arms. Thus far may they go, but no farther. For position is everything in India—as long as you stop there.

But when you come home, either permanently or on



holiday, the fact that you are on the dining list at Government House cuts no ice in London. It is only when the social snob from India takes a trip home and rubs shoulders with ordinary mortals again that he comes back to earth. And when he gets pushed off the kerb by a hard-working Covent Garden porter he realizes how unimportant he really is.

These last few years of stress and uncertainty in India have done much to bring Europeans of all classes more closely together. For this reason, if for no other, snobbery there is on the decline. But things move very slowly in the East, and it will take a long while for these silly European caste prejudices to be eliminated altogether.

Some explanation here on the subject of certain expressions which are offensive to residents of India will not be out of place.

Considerable misapprehension exists in England with regard to the words Eurasian, Anglo-Indian and European. Their modern meaning is misunderstood, and unintentional annoyance is caused frequently to sensitive and loyal people by careless phraseology.

Broadly speaking, the three communities living in India may now accurately be classified as Indians, Europeans and Anglo-Indians.

The word "Eurasian," as far as India is concerned, has ceased to exist. In some ways this is regrettable, for the word so aptly described those people of mixed European and Indian descent.

In old times the word "Anglo-Indian" was universally applied to British people who had lived for many years in India or Burma. The word is still used in this connexion by people who are unaware of its changed meaning. The term "Anglo-Indian" should now be used to describe only those people who, in the old days, were rightly termed "Eurasians." The use of the word in any other sense is, in these days, inaccurate, and very offensive to residents in India.



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The misuse of the word "native" has done much to make us unpopular in the East. Nobody refers to dwellers in England as "natives" or "English natives," though they are undoubtedly natives of England.

The pure-bred native of India is an Indian, just as much as the pure-bred native of England is an Englishman. Each has an equal right to be called by his correct name.

It is even worse to refer to the Indian as a "black man," or a "nigger." Yet these terms are sometimes used by people who should know better, while illiterate or ignorant Europeans only too frequently refer to Indians in these inaccurate and highly objectionable ways.

Indians are not black, neither have they negro blood in their veins. They quite rightly resent being referred to in this way.

Generally speaking, the word "European," when associated with India, is used to indicate a British or, strangely enough, an American person of pure ancestry who is resident in India but whose legal domicile is situate in either Great Britain or the Dominions, the Irish Free State, or the United States of America. Of course, if an American citizen, he or she must be pure white.

Strangely enough, the members of other European nationalities are always referred to by their country of origin. To the Indian it is unthinkable that a European should use any other language as his mother-tongue than English.

Finally there is that horrid word "country-born."

You don't hear it in England very much in these days, but only too often is it used by Europeans in India, or those who have returned from India. It is applied in a derogatory sense to those people of undoubted European parentage who have been unwise enough to select India as their place of birth, and who, through no choice of their own, may have had to live there for a good many years without the chance of childhood and education in England.



The term "country-born" is a word born of snobbery out of arrogance. And the slight its use implies is all the more remarkable when it is realized that men like the late Lord Roberts, Lord Chelmsford, Mr Rudyard Kipling, and many others whose names are world-famous, were all born in India.

To such an extent has this prejudice against those born in the country grown, that such people are looked upon by their fellows who were discriminating enough to have been born elsewhere as being quite outside the pale. So bitterly is the disadvantage felt that many young people who are born in the country, and have had no early opportunity of visiting England, find it advisable, on attaining years of discretion, to make a special visit over here and stay sufficiently long to pretend on their return that they are then visiting India for the first time, and know nothing at all of its ways and customs.

It is all very puerile, and cannot easily be understood by people in England, for it seems ridiculous that any child should be handicapped from infancy merely because its parents were unable, or unwilling, to send their little one home for early schooling ; or there are other reasons. These other reasons centre round the problem which presents itself to every married man who has children and resides in India. Either he must let his wife go home with the child, or the child must go alone. In either case the family is broken up.

If the family is to remain united, the child is for ever more branded with the word "country-born."

That the sacrifice is so often made, and the family broken up, is also accounted for by the belief that a child of tender years is likely to acquire habits and speech which are undesirable, by being in continuous contact with India in its most impressionable years. It is argued, maybe truly, that an English atmosphere is needed to eradicate, or correct, those tendencies.

But a great deal depends on the parents themselves ; for if they are cultured people, and can give their child



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a decent schooling in the hills, which is quite possible in India to-day, there is not any real risk of a child growing up in such a way as to disgrace its parents in after life.

The parents can quite easily prevent their children acquiring the *chee-chee* accent, and those gesticulating motions of the hands which accompany it. This *chee-chee* accent, by the way, is almost identical with the spoken English of the Welsh people, and the reason for its adoption by the Anglo-Indian community has been much speculated on but never satisfactorily determined.

During the years of the war it was quite impossible for any children to be sent home from India to be educated. It is a cynical commentary on the snobbishness of so many Europeans resident in India to think that, because a man was on duty there during a national crisis, his children must henceforth be referred to slightly as "country-born." The word is offensive. It should be banished from the English language.

But, however much we may deplore these caste prejudices and objectionable terms, they still exist, and have to be allowed for by many who wish heartily they could be more independent. For the man in India who is to get on with his firm has many unwritten laws with which to conform. He must be tactful, and juniors are expected to confine their attentions to work and sport, and leave politics and public positions to those who, by long residence in, and experience of, the country are more qualified, and have greater leisure to give to such things.

There are certain people he must call on, and there are others who must be avoided. In fact, the whole business world is hedged round with convention almost as great as that which encompasses the official class. And the young man will go farthest who walks the most warily.



CHAPTER III

Business Life in the Cities—Salaries and the Cost of Living—The Housing Problem and the Rent Act

IN Mesopotamia I once shared a tent with an officer of the Indian Army Reserve, and discovered that he could speak but a few words of Hindustani. This was astonishing in view of the fact that a thorough knowledge of the vernacular was supposed to be one of the essential qualifications for an I.A.R.O. commission. Indeed, a familiarity with Indian conditions and a thorough grip of the vernacular are the principal reasons for the much higher rates of pay enjoyed by Indian Army and Indian Army Reserve officers than those allowed officers of the British Army who for the time being are serving with them.

I commented on this admitted ignorance of the language, and my friend explained that in peace time he was in business in Bombay and that a knowledge of the vernacular was superfluous there. All Indian clerks wrote and spoke English, and business in European-controlled offices and other similar establishments was carried on entirely in that language. Therefore he had not troubled to learn Hindustani at all, though the omission had apparently been overlooked by the army authorities. However that may be, the information regarding the universality of English-speaking clerks in European establishments in India was accurate enough, as I soon discovered when I went there after the war.

The language of Bombay is principally *Gujurati*, while that of Calcutta is *Bengali*. But most Indians speak Hindustani in addition to having a thorough knowledge of their own provincial language. The amount they speak, and its purity, varies very considerably in different parts



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of India. Hindustani—or *Urdu*, as it is called officially—is really “the language of the camps.” It is the principal medium of articulate expression between Europeans and Indians.

Urdu is the vernacular recognized as the official language in addition to English. All officers of the regular Indian Army have to pass examinations in written and spoken *Urdu*, while the members of the Indian Civil Service have, in addition, to be equally familiar with the language of the province in which they elect first to be stationed when starting their career in India.

In all there are 102 languages spoken in India, though only 23 of them are spoken by more than a million souls.

Douglas Story, the well-known journalist and war correspondent, who died in India during the summer of 1921, once told me that whenever it was suggested to him that he should “learn the language” his invariable reply was: “But which language shall I learn?”

There is a good deal to be said for this point of view, but, on the other hand, there is no denying the fact that Europeans who know nothing of *Urdu* are at a distinct disadvantage when dealing with Indians. The Indian has more regard for the *sahib* who can make himself intelligible to him in the vernacular. This applies especially when dealing with servants. Moreover, a working knowledge of Hindustani will see you through most parts of India, pretty much the same as a working knowledge of French will see you through most parts of Europe.

There are many occasions in the course of ordinary business life when an Indian has to be listened to and questioned who knows *Urdu*, but understands little or no English. Then, if you cannot speak in the vernacular, the services of an interpreter have to be resorted to. Likely enough you send for one of your own clerks, and he starts a long and animated conversation with the man, which



ceases only when you break in and insist on an explanation, having grown tired of listening to a flow of eloquence which is to you quite unintelligible.

You ask what it is all about. The interpreter makes a brief explanation in English, but seems incapable of conveying the full meaning of it all to you. The man's talk has lasted many minutes, but its interpretation takes barely as many seconds. What is told you is really the effect which the words uttered have had on his mind—he will never give you a literal, or semi-literal, translation. The result is usually most unsatisfactory, and as for getting a direct "yes" or "no" in reply to your questions—the thing simply can't be done.

The Indian's mind works in that complex way peculiar to the Orient. The intention is all the while to say what he thinks will please or appease you, quite irrespective of whether his statements are true or otherwise. The man questioned will vary his story greatly—may, under continued pressure, alter it entirely from beginning to end. And through it all run protestations of his relations' and his own trustworthiness, supplemented by an oft-repeated assurance of his undying faith in your justice and generosity—particularly the latter.

Such interviews usually end in your making a decision which is based more on intuition than on the conflicting and confusing evidence that has been given. And it usually turns out to be a right decision, for you get uncannily accurate in your summing up of the rights and wrongs of these cases. It is largely a question of practice and the exhibition of lots of patience, for the Oriental mind delights to clothe its thoughts in words and phrases which are ambiguous.

Only too often expressions are used which are intended, quite deliberately, to mislead you and side-track the line of investigation.

How wearisome it all is. All the time you have to be dragging the witness back to the point. And the time that is wasted at such interviews, and the strain upon



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one's nervous system, only those who have had plenty of experience can properly understand.

The only too-frequent futility of these kind of investigations makes you heartily wish for a thorough grasp of the language.

So, if you go to India, I recommend you take the trouble to thoroughly master *Urdu* if you intend remaining in the country for any length of time and intend to be a success in your business.

It is not generally realized that the total number of Europeans in India is under 200,000. And the vast majority of those who are non-officials live in either Calcutta or Bombay, though there is also a strong non-official community of Europeans in Madras.

Of these places Calcutta has, without doubt, the largest European population, and the city is still the commercial capital of India.

Until 1912 it was also the political capital, but in that year the seat of the Central Government was moved thence to Delhi.

Bombay is the chief port in the country, by reason of its very favourable situation on the coast. The world's largest liners can come right alongside the city and berth in Alexandra Docks. Bombay is thus the principal entrance to and exit from India.

Calcutta is not so fortunate. It is situated some miles up the Hooghly, and really large vessels are unable to pass the bar at the river's mouth. Thus only liners up to 10,000 tons' displacement are able to proceed all the way to Calcutta itself, and on the rare occasions when great Atlantic liners, usually laden with American tourists, arrive at the mouth of the Hooghly, the passengers have to tranship at Diamond Harbour and proceed up-river in smaller steamers.

There is much friendly rivalry between Calcutta and Bombay.

Both for many years have proclaimed themselves the



second city of the Empire ; the allusion refers of course to population only, despite the implied references of enthusiasts who use the terms without any qualifying distinction whatsoever.

At the last census, taken in 1921, Calcutta had a total population of 1,132,256 in its municipal area. Bombay totalled 1,175,914, over a recently enlarged municipal area.

Now that Calcutta's municipal area has been likewise enlarged there can be little real difference to-day in the actual population of the two cities. Anyway we will leave it at that, for, though the counting of heads is a favourite method of invidious comparison in India, the mere size of a town does not necessarily indicate its true importance.

Life in Indian cities and the life up-country are two very different things ; the difference there is much greater than in England.

But as the majority of Europeans in India reside in the cities, and we are for the moment discussing business life, it is well you should have an impartial idea of the two chief business centres in the country. I will take Bombay first, and be as fair as possible.

Bombay residents like their city best. They point with justifiable pride to the open sea in front and the hills behind, both easy of access and alike providing means of healthful recreation.

But the climate of the city is muggy all the year round ; Bombay has no cold weather at all. When I landed there one October it was hotter than at Basra where I had embarked. The nights are always oppressive, and Bombay's hotels, restaurants and places of amusement are not equal to those of Calcutta. There is the cosmopolitan population usually associated with seaports, but the city of Bombay is in reality the stronghold of the Parsees ; their influence is paramount in its political and business life.

When the new arrival leaves the central station or



the Alexandra Docks, the approach to Hornby Road, Bombay's principal thoroughfare, is only possible through streets the pavements of which are cluttered with bullocks and cows, sacred but very dirty, who wander about at their own sweet will. The atmosphere is heavy with offensive smells and the noise in the streets is appalling, even for an Indian city.

Bombay has several fine clubs, notably the Royal Bombay Yacht Club, which provides facilities for its members such as no other club in the East can possibly do. It is delightfully situated, right on the sea-front, with gardens stretching down almost to the water's edge.

The Gymkhana Club is a very jolly place, situated in the centre of the city and at the very heart of the mercantile community. It is, in fact, their stronghold, and very popular, catering for every taste in both indoor and outdoor sport. The European resident of Bombay who is unable, or ineligible, to become a member of the Gymkhana has a very thin time indeed.

Bombay possesses some fine buildings, and has a pretty residential quarter on Malabar Hill. There is a fine sports' club some little distance out, and a race-course farther away still.

Certainly Bombay has many attractions, and, for the European who knows no better place in India, is a very good city to live and work in. Yet, when all this has been conceded, I must regard Calcutta as the finest city in the country, and, possibly, anywhere in the East, from either an architectural, business, sporting or social standpoint.

For in Calcutta you have the Victoria Memorial, a massive and truly magnificent marble pile: the cathedral, with its tall and delicate spire, standing in an old-world garden; Government House, in the very centre of the city, standing in spacious grounds, now the residence of the Governor of Bengal, but previous to 1912 the principal official residence of the Viceroy



himself; Belvedere, another official residence, and used in these days by the Viceroy on the occasion of his brief visits to Calcutta. Then there is the General Post Office, a truly handsome building, and close by the offices of the Bengal Secretariat (or Writer's Buildings, as they are still called by most people), which occupy the whole north side of Dalhousie Square. The High Court and many other fine public buildings go to make up a city which has justly been called "the city of palaces."

Calcutta is rich in historical links with the past, back to the times of Warren Hastings, and much earlier. The old cathedral, St John's, still stands, though it is no longer a cathedral, but only a parish church. Therein may be seen the wonderful painting by Zoffany of *The Last Supper*. This takes the form of an altar-piece, and the faces portrayed around the table were recognized as bearing a remarkable likeness to well-known Calcutta residents of that day. It is said that Zoffany avenged himself on an enemy by painting him into the picture in the person of Judas Iscariot.

Calcutta's chief glory is its *maidan*, that great, green, open space, which is at once the playground and the very lungs of the city. Almost the size of Hyde Park, and quite unfenced, the *maidan* spreads itself from Esplanade and Chowringhi, the two principal European shopping streets of Calcutta, right across to Hastings.

The *maidan* is government property and must be kept clear for purposes of defence. Old Fort William stands in the centre, surrounded by a moat, with ramparts and guns complete, and is the headquarters of the Bengal Presidency Brigade. The west boundary of the *maidan* is the River Hooghly, and close alongside is the Strand, a favourite road on which to drive of an evening. Here motor-cars follow one another in an apparently endless stream, returning by one of the numerous roads which bisect the *maidan*, while their occupants "take the air." The Victoria Memorial stands at the extreme



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south of the *maidan*, while Chowringhi forms the eastern boundary.

Spaces are allotted on the *maidan* for tennis, football, bowls and golf, and the Royal Calcutta Turf Club has its principal race-course there also. Here it is that the chief fixtures of this world-famous club are held, including the race for the King-Emperor's Cup, and that for the Viceroy's Cup.

At the extreme north-west corner of the *maidan* is to be erected the permanent building designed for the use of the Bengal Legislative Council, which at present has a temporary home in the old Town Hall. But for even so legitimate a purpose as the housing of the provincial legislature, there was strong objection taken, by Europeans and Indians alike, over this encroachment on the *maidan*. For this vast open space is a cherished heritage of priceless value in its present state to the community as a whole. As such it is jealously guarded, and permanent buildings on the *maidan* are expressly forbidden.

Calcutta's hotels, restaurants, theatres, clubs, golf-courses and principal race-course are the finest in the country, maybe in the East, while its business life is greater, and conducted on more up-to-date methods, than can be found elsewhere in India.

Calcutta is, if anything, too European in its ways to suit those romantics who are saturated in the literature of the past which depicted the easy-going life of the old-time India. For in the city, nowadays, you work European hours and wear the conventional garb of the European business man at home, though made of material light in colour and texture. Yet the climate remains all but tropical.

Up-country, in the *moffusil*, as it is called, you start work early in the day and finish by 4 P.M.; not so in Calcutta, for there it is customary to take exercise before breakfast and to arrive at your office about 10 A.M., while the shops usually open an hour earlier. Work continues,



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with a short interval for lunch, until 6 P.M., and on Saturdays, 1 P.M. Sunday is, of course, a free day.

Work on Saturday mornings is not taken too seriously in offices, for during the racing season, which lasts from August right through with hardly a break until the following March, everyone's mind is full of the Saturday afternoon's sport, and a study of form and race tips is freely indulged in by most sections of the community.

Life in these Indian cities is very much what you are able to make it, and the presence of a wide circle of friends and acquaintances does much to make your life a full and jolly one, and to deaden the critical instinct. Of course it is fashionable in most European circles throughout India to damn the country, and the life there, on all possible occasions. But, if the objections are dealt with quite honestly, it will be found in most cases that the life in England which is held up in regretful comparison with the life in India is not the life which individuals were used to in the days before they came out to India. Rather is it the life which they imagine could be led by them there now, had they the opportunity of transferring their present social status and salary to the more temperate climate.

Six months' holiday at home on full pay usually suffices; for when it comes to an end, and it becomes necessary to settle down to work again, there are not many Europeans returning to India who can conscientiously say they are sorry for it. For, especially in these days, England is a better playground than workshop. Jobs are more easily held down in India, and the chances of being thrown out of employment there are much less than is now the case at home.

True, you save little or no money in a subordinate position in the East, but, for all that, if you live temperately and keep good health, India has many compensations. Your vanity is pleasantly tickled, your spending power apparently much increased, and, provided you are the covenanted assistant of a good firm, the credit



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allowed you is almost unlimited. A few words on this subject of credit will not come amiss, for the "chit" system is a combined blessing and curse which is peculiar to the East.

Europeans seldom pay cash for goods in India ; they just "sign" for their purchases. The newcomer may not do so at first, but he will speedily acquire the habit. It is all so fatally easy.

You go on signing all the month and, at the end, your "chits" come home, like chickens, to roost. An Indian collector, called a *durwan* (or bill-wallah), appears on your doorstep. He usually calls at the most inconvenient hour of the day, that hour when, having got up a bit late, you are feeling liverish and are scampering through breakfast with a half-open eye on the clock. Then as you rush out to office you are confronted by a tall Indian in a short shirt who salaams profoundly and holds out a long envelope. It is fat and large.

The old hand passes the trouble on to his bearer, while the newcomer pauses to open his present. There is the bill, and the total seems colossal ; surely there is some mistake ? But no ; there are your "chits" signed in your own hand, proof positive of your indebtedness to some firm or other.

That first day of the new month brings *durwans* galore, with more and more envelopes. There seems no end to the fellows. Your cheque-book grows thinner as the day grows longer ; you had really no idea you had spent so much. You must pull in a bit !

And so you do—for a few days, and then the merry game starts all over again. For it is so fatally easy to buy on credit in India, and you can easily sign away a month's pay in a fortnight.

There are "chits" from the garage where you get petrol, and other necessities, for the car ; the provision-store account tots up to a hefty amount ; then there is the landlord—he simply *must* be paid ; the tailor and clothier must have something on account ; the hotel



and restaurant present bills which are not so easily recollected, but there are your signatures and they must be honoured.

The newspapers are mostly cute enough to collect their subscription dues in advance, but all the tradespeople will give long credit if you pay something substantial on account and go on trading with them. Bad debts are often incurred, but the good customers pay high prices, so that the bad ones may pay little or nothing at all; and thus the merry game goes on. You can even sign for taxi rides, and it is only of recent years that the theatres stopped taking "chits."

It is a pernicious system, but very pleasant and convenient withal, and will probably outlast your life and mine.

The status of certain classes of Europeans goes up very considerably when they come to India. The man who was just a plumber at home becomes a sanitary engineer on arrival in the new country. The operative from a Scottish jute factory finds himself in charge of thousands of Indian operatives, and given free quarters in a large compound adjacent to the mill on the outskirts of Calcutta. He is usually able to do himself well and save money into the bargain.

The bank clerk from home becomes one of a number of mercantile assistants on joining a large Indian bank. He sits comfortably beneath a fan, and can smoke at his desk while an Indian clerk calls out to his checking. And it is the Indians who do most of the totting up and balancing which bank clerks are accustomed to do as a matter of course at home. The actual paying out of money over the counter is left entirely to Indian tellers, and though the European in a bank has responsibility, he is not burdened with the detail work and drudgery which were his lot in England.

The fitter in a small garage in England becomes an engineer on arrival in India, and frequently a manager at that. He has authority and responsibility where at



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home he was but a bench hand. But he is a *sahib* now, if he but cares to live up to the requisite standard of living and behaviour. For all white men are supposed to be *sahibs* in India, all are equal thus far, though some are *burra* (head) *sahibs*, and some are *chota* (junior) *sahibs*. An amusing story occurs to me which illustrates these definitions.

It was in Mesopotamia, during the war, and at the time I chanced to be the senior officer in a certain camp. One of my subalterns, but newly arrived from England, was quite ignorant of Hindustani. But he had been told that *chota* meant "little," as indeed it does in some senses, and that *burra* meant "large," also equally true.

He was intensely annoyed because he was always referred to by the Indians as the "*chota sahib*," while I was referred to as the "*burra sahib*"—the joke of it all being that my friend was a very small man, and very touchy about his lack of inches. He imagined that the Indians were casting a slur on his stature when calling him the "*chota sahib*."

When I explained to him that though he had been six feet and more he would still remain the "*chota sahib*" he appeared somewhat mollified, though I don't believe he was ever really convinced, and for a long while retained the mistaken impression that the men were having a joke at his expense.

I do not wish to convey the impression that a man has but to obtain a business appointment in India in order to ensure an easy and pleasant life for the rest of his days. Such cases have been known, but they are, in these days at all events, quite the exception.

Business conditions in India are not what they were twenty, or even seven, years ago. Plenty of money was made there during the war, and directly afterwards, but the complete failure of the company-promoting boom of 1919, resulting in the loss of vast sums of money which had been invested in industrial under-



takings, has brought into disesteem all new enterprises of an industrial nature.

Business staffs have been greatly reduced, and those Europeans who remain have to work pretty hard nowadays for their living, so that men who go to India in these days must be prepared to serve their first contract for a bare living, and nothing more.

If the position is clearly understood no harm is done, but so often men are led away by the figures quoted in rupees appearing higher than the worth of the salary really is in English money.

And again, you notice advertisements in the home papers inviting applications for posts in India, and offering rates of remuneration which are quite inadequate to support the European in the style in which he is expected to live in an Indian city.

Frequently the pay offered is as low as Rs400 a month—sometimes even less. For the unqualified and untried youngster this is probably more than he is really worth, but nevertheless he will have a hard struggle to live on his pay.

At the present rate of exchange Rs400 is just £30—a matter of £7, 10s. per week. Only single men are usually offered such a salary, and it would be absurd for a married man to accept it unless he was to live up-country and have quarters allotted him.

If you are married, and have to live in Calcutta, Bombay or Madras, you can reckon that rent alone will eat up one-third of your monthly salary. Mansion flats in Calcutta range from Rs250 a month upwards, a very fair average being Rs400. And the Rent Act, which has helped tenants so long, is this year expiring and will not be renewed, so rents will likely increase before long.

It is therefore safe to assume that a married man who has been living in England at the rate of, say, £40 a month will find that a salary of Rs.1000 a month is necessary to live equally well in Calcutta or Bombay. True, many scrape along on less, but they mostly live



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beyond their means, and life is a constant struggle to keep up appearances and make both ends meet. If you are going out to that sort of thing, you are better off in a smaller post at home.

Single men who are content to live in a boarding-house and share a bedroom can usually find accommodation at Rs200 a month. For another Rs50 they can have a bedroom to themselves. A good many young fellows live at the local Y.M.C.A., which gives excellent value for money.

But it must always be remembered that there are certain codes of living which the large European firms in India expect their staffs to live up to. In Calcutta, for instance, there is what is known as the "South of Park Street" fetish. This refers to the European residential quarter proper, and it is expected of the newly joined mercantile assistant that he reside in the conventional locality. He must have a good address to put on his notepaper.

That is all very well in theory, and no doubt desirable enough from everybody's point of view. Unfortunately it is not always practical to live "South of Park Street," save at a cost which is out of all comparison with the comfort enjoyed. Space in the select quarter is strictly limited, and, as it is, Europeans are herded together in the manner which is usually associated with tenement buildings in England. The following advertisement is taken from a Calcutta paper, and, while no doubt written sarcastically, the plight of the advertiser may be guessed as closely approximating to the facts as stated.

"Mercantile Bachelor, patient disposition, wishes to be accorded the privilege of supporting a refined private family of profiteers in Calcutta. Best locality essential, South of Park Street preferred. Willing to share a bedroom having a minimum of furniture and cheerless aspect. Not more than two other occupants. Privacy



no object. Prepared to entertain any reasonable offer under Rs300 per month. Immediate entry. Highest references given and none asked. Apply Box 4511."

It is stated by the opponents of the extension of the Calcutta Rent Act that cases of profiteering under the Act are so rampant as regards subletting that the Act has failed in many ways to help the majority of people who cannot afford to have a flat of their own.

Landlords have their own worries, and first tenants also, but it is the sub-tenants who have suffered most. It is quite the usual thing for a lessee to live rent free and make a handsome profit in addition by subletting. So Calcutta is no better than London in respect to the housing problem, and the rents, even allowing for higher salaries, are much greater.

Flats have sprung up in many parts of the city, but the cost of building them in the best localities has been very great. I know one block of flats where the rents range from Rs1250 down to Rs250 a month. There are some two hundred flats in the building, and the architect told me that unless all these flats were let at the prices asked, permanently occupied and the rents paid regularly, the landlord would not get 10 per cent. on his capital outlay.

Land is very valuable in Calcutta, and the cost of manual labour has increased 200 per cent. since 1914 in the building and kindred trades.

While some landlords have attempted to profiteer, the fault lies chiefly with those people who have let out single rooms at twice the rent of the entire flat, for, in Calcutta, as in England, the placing of a few sticks of furniture in a room brings it outside the restrictions of the Rent Act.

Many business men find it desirable to reside outside Calcutta altogether, but the *chota sahib* cannot always afford a car, and the cost of transport by taxi, or even train, will be a still further heavy drain on his slender



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resources. And even outside Calcutta itself accommodation is strictly limited.

Nor does expense stop here; there are lots of other calls on your purse. Life insurance, a very necessary thing in India, is a constant drain, likewise club fees, amusements, holidays, drinks and smokes, etc., are all fairly heavy items of expenditure in city life. You want everything you had in England in the way of personal comforts, plus a good deal more besides. That is frankly the position, and the pros and cons should carefully be weighed by anyone thinking of making a change and who is tempted by what appears on the surface to be a large salary.

And what of one's future, taking into consideration the increasing employment of Indians in all capacities in the country? The Reforms have a direct effect bearing on this problem, and a brief explanation of their inception, present working, and possible future, will at this stage be useful.



CHAPTER IV

The Reforms : their Initiation, Progress and Future

THE business man who returned to his usual occupation in India after a lengthy absence with the army in Mesopotamia, or elsewhere, found the country in a state of unrest and transition. The Press, both European and vernacular, were busy discussing the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Scheme.

The European Association, the only organized body of non-official Europeans in the country, and the Services, alike detested the scheme, and protested against its necessity or expediency on every possible occasion. Those Indians who wanted self-government were a small minority of their countrymen, and the scheme did not go nearly far enough to satisfy them. As for the masses of Indians, they neither knew nor cared anything about the matter.

However, the politicians at home had settled the matter. Mr Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, had visited the country, and with the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, had decided that the time was ripe for the peoples of India to have a direct voice in the ruling of their country. The British Cabinet acted on these recommendations, and, in 1919, the Reforms came into being.

In this connexion an interesting story was current in India at the time. I cannot vouch for its truth, but it is sufficiently probable to be worthy of repetition here. The inference of the story is that had there been no Mesopotamian scandal there would likely enough have been no Reforms Scheme, the tale being that during the time Mr (now Sir) Austen Chamberlain was Secretary of State for India, he was invited by the Viceroy to visit



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India. Before the invitation could be answered the Mesopot scandal came to light, which involved the death in India of the then Commander-in-Chief and the resignation of the Secretary of State at home. It has always been recognized that the latter chivalrously accepted the blame for a state of things in which he was nowise directly concerned. His resignation was much regretted in India.

The new Secretary of State, Mr Montagu, on arriving at the India Office, discovered the Viceroy's invitation, and promptly accepted it. Thus it chanced that it was Mr Montagu, and not the actual Secretary of State to whom the invitation had been extended, who came out to India and brought his very Liberal views to bear on the vexed question of a new Constitution. It is an interesting speculation, though a vain one, whether the recommendations subsequently made by Mr Montagu to the Cabinet would have found favour with his predecessor in office. European opinion in India thought quite otherwise, which may have had something to do with the wide circulation enjoyed by this story. I give it for what it is worth, and not as a serious contribution to the history of the inception of the Reforms.

In order to understand the effect on India of the Reforms (or Dyarchy, as the new form of Government is sometimes called), it is necessary to have some rough idea of the population of the country and its religious components.

My figures are those of the last census, taken in 1921. Then the total population of India was 318,492,480 souls. Out of this number 246,003,293 were residents in British India, the remainder being inhabitants of the Indian native states. The Reforms applied only to British India.

Only 10 per cent. of India's total population live in towns, and of these only 5 per cent. inhabit towns of over 10,000 of a population. And, strange as it may seem,



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men outnumber women in India, there being only 903 females to every 1000 male inhabitants. There are 208,106 schools in the country, and these are attended by 8,381,350 scholars.

The franchise is not granted to people in India on the same lines as in England. The Reforms placed representation on a basis of communal representation—that is to say, the Hindus, which with Sikhs, Jains and Parsees form 75 per cent. of the population, were allotted representation in the several provincial legislative councils in strict proportion to the numerical strength of their community. So with the Mohammedans, who form 21 per cent. of the population, their representation was allotted strictly in relation to their numerical strength as a community. It follows automatically that the balance of parties shows a larger number of members representing Hindus than are to be found representing Mohammedans, while the non-official Europeans, because of their small numerical strength (there are only 116,000 in the whole of India), have very few representatives.

To the Westerner this appears a strange way of allotting legislative representation. It is strange, and it has yet to be proved that it is a right way. But it was the way which appeared to be most likely of acceptance to a people whose every act and thought is guided by religion, not the religion born of conviction but the religion acquired by inheritance.

Once the Reforms became law the European Association and the European Press of India ceased to oppose the new departure. Dislike of the scheme remained, but it was agreed to make the best of a bad business and loyally to support and endeavour to work the Reforms. And this attitude has been maintained, consistently and fairly, despite much provocation and discouragement. But it should always be remembered that the Reforms were never wanted by those Europeans who knew their India, neither was there any demand for a changed Constitution on the part of the vast bulk of Indians



themselves. There were no popular demonstrations in India such as those which occurred in England and brought about an extension of the franchise here. And it must be remembered that in India, with its vast population of over 300,000,000, not 1,000,000 Indians have even now the least political consciousness.

However, that fact in no wise discouraged the authors of the Reforms ; on the contrary, it was their considered and avowed intention "to disturb the placid contentment of the masses." To the reformer's way of thinking this very ignorance and contentment provided the strongest possible argument for the Reforms themselves.

A sharp and bitter controversy started—and its end is even now by no means in sight—as to the wisdom of the means of political representation afforded under the scheme.

One school of thought believes that communal representation has but intensified the age-old Hindu-Moslem bitterness, for this method of representation, being based on the mere size of a particular religious community, has caused both Hindus and Moslems to proselytize by every means in their power. Only by such means can the Moslems hope to increase their political representation, and by similar means the Hindus strive to maintain, or even increase, theirs. The number of lives lost in religious riots during the period the Reforms have been in operation has far exceeded the total casualties in all such riots throughout India for the past fifty years. Those who argue thus point with justification to the fanatical Moplahs of the Malabar coast, who rose in the summer of 1921 and massacred thousands of Hindus, besides forcing as many more to embrace the Moslem faith. And last year's prolonged riots in Calcutta, which were primarily of a religious nature, provide another strong argument in favour of this point of view. People who hold a contrary opinion on this question of communal representation declare that the violence of the past few years has been not so much actually due to



the introduction of the Reforms as that the violence has developed with the Reforms. These defenders of the principle of communal representation argue that, had any other form of representation been substituted, it is quite likely that the new scheme of government would have at once broken down. They do not believe that a system whereby electorates would have been composed of a mixture of Hindus and Moslems could have been a practicable and workable proposition. Furthermore, they blame the delay in our making peace with Turkey for a great deal of the unrest of these past few years. With this latter belief I am inclined to agree ; and there are other contributory causes, notably the activities of interested agitators, both in and outside the British Empire, who have done their best to work on the religious feelings of Hindu and Moslem alike so as to make both believe that British rule is accountable for all the evils and domestic differences, both religious and social, to which India is, and always will be, heir. So much then for a brief exposition of the two opposing schools of thought on communal representation. It is necessarily incomplete, for volumes could be written on the subject, but I think sufficient in a book of this kind.

As a direct outcome of this sharp divergence of opinion the Swaraj Party came into being. Swaraj is the logical development of the policy of non-co-operation which was started by Mr Gandhi but soon passed beyond his power of control. Swaraj means Home Rule for India in much the same way that Home Rule for Ireland meant an Irish Free State. Imitation went as far as copying the crude methods of the early Fenians, and the Swaraj Party's obstruction in the provincial legislative councils on their first entrance was based on the tactics of the old Home Rule Party in the British House of Commons. But the great and essential difference lies in the fact that, whereas the Irish Home Rulers in the Commons had a great mass of the people of Ireland behind them, the Swarajists



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have not. They also lack the Irishman's saving grace of humour.

These Swarajist legislators are for the most part lawyers and professional politicians, desirous of office and greedy for the spoils which a successful career under a Swaraj regime could bring them. Not only do the Swarajists aspire completely to dominate the legislature, they believe in controlling the municipalities of the cities of India also. To this end they made an impressive start by capturing the corporations of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. They showed their hand in Bombay by promptly giving orders which ensured that no British or Colonial goods were to be purchased by the municipality, while in Calcutta and Madras the Swaraj Corporation committed every possible anti-British act, short of such direct prohibition of Empire goods, of which they were capable. No European or loyal Indian was sure of his job although he might have been a municipal employee for many years; only Government stood between these public servants and instant dismissal. Wherever possible jobs were found for relatives of councillors, and the post of Chief Executive Officer of the Calcutta Corporation was given to a leading Swarajist. Incidentally it may be observed that this individual was arrested by the Bengal Government after his complicity in seditious plots was established, and promptly clapped into jail. Jobbery and corruption were rife in these Swaraj corporations, and had they not been promptly checked by Government it was their intention to obtain control of every public institution in their city, even the hospitals.

But the Swarajist has been found out by his own people, and the party have lost seats at succeeding municipal elections, so that in course of time these corporations will in all probability return to normality.

Indians in the cities make so much noise that it is only too frequently forgotten that the vast majority of Indians live outside the towns and that the ignorant agriculturists and up-country workers of all kinds form



90 per cent. of the entire population of India. These people care nothing for the intrigues of the cities ; all they ask for is to be left alone to earn their daily bread in peace. They are still courteous and respectful to those Europeans who treat them decently. The manners of the bear-garden are reserved for the edification of the provincial legislative councils, and the council chambers of city corporations, and are indulged in by the semi-educated Swarajist, who, while boasting of the culture of India and its ancient civilization, manages successfully to defile both. And a great many of these men have been to England for a classical education and have generally been spoilt in the process.

To the simple *ryot*—as the agriculturist is called—the British official on the spot represents security, law and order. To him he goes in trouble, sure of an impartial and patient hearing. Indians in general would rather take his advice, and accept his word, than that of their own countrymen. And the average Indian servant would rather work for a European than an Indian master. The *sahib* does not promise that which he is unable to fulfil or has no intention of performing ; also he pays his servants regularly. Of course he insists on discipline, order and cleanliness—virtues which are not of much account as such to the Indian servant, and are only acquired painfully in course of time. Still, for all that, he finds the *sahib* a good master, and as a rule is happy and contented in his work. The Swarajists found that servants were not to be turned against their masters by soft words and vague promises of a better time to come.

But with the simple countryman the paid agitator fared somewhat better. He was successful in many instances in poisoning the minds of simple up-country folk against the British *rāj*. He quoted the words of Mr Gandhi, enlarged and twisted their meaning, and promised an immediate new heaven on earth to all who would aid the advent of Swaraj. Some of these agents even went so far as to allege that the British *rāj* was



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already ended, that in a few days' time the Mahatma—as Gandhi is always called by the faithful—would be proclaimed King. An easy and lazy life was promised, plus high wages, for all who would vote at the coming elections for Swaraj candidates. It was said that so certain was the reign of Gandhi that Europeans in the cities were already leaving the country in thousands. It all sounded most probable to the simple *ryot*, who had never been outside his native village; certainly more probable than the aeroplane which he had seen with his own eyes flying overhead. A little judiciously applied money clinched the argument in a truly Oriental manner.

By such devices and misstatements the Swaraj Party managed to sweep the country at the second elections, when the new leadership began to be felt and the old policy of pure non-co-operation was thrown overboard as impractical and insufficiently spectacular. And the simple electors awaited with stoical patience for the promised change of government by Gandhi to come to pass. They are still waiting.

Entrance to the councils followed a period of intensive non-co-operation, for in the first councils the Swarajists took no part at all. But in this second election no Indian who failed to toe the line and obey the dictates of the Swaraj Party had any real chance of success in most of the constituencies. And many anti-Swarajists were brow-beaten into withdrawing their candidature altogether.

Prior to this second election was the day of *hartels*; shops were closed, either with or without the consent of their owners. Peaceful picketing with odds of 20 to 1 against the shopkeeper is a very effective form of persuasion in India. The colleges were boycotted; the effective measure adopted by Swaraj students of lying down in solid rows across the entrance steps was found to be quite forceful enough an excuse to keep students away from their studies. Then one morning Calcutta awoke to find its municipal market closed, the frightened



shopkeepers scattered in all directions, and no supplies of food to be had. Trams and taxis ceased to run, and those Indians who wished to work were forcibly prevented from so doing.

This sort of thing happened, on and off, every week or so for some time, but it was found to be pressing more hardly on Indians than on the hated Europeans, so gradually the enthusiasm waned. Other "stunts" were tried. Processions of non-co-operators were formed and paraded the streets, escorted by bands, and taking toll from all and sundry who would give money to the funds of the Swaraj Party. They all wore white homespun garments and the little round cap which is a cross between that worn by a baker and that issued to a convict. Some of these processions were a mile long and became a great nuisance in obstructing traffic. But they were very popular with the work-shy, for each young processionist was paid eight annas for his part in the proceedings, and his task was light—merely to walk as slowly as possible and to shout lustily at regular intervals: "*Bande Mataram!*" ("Hail to the Motherland") and "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" ("Hail to Mahatma Gandhi"). Then there was the organization called the Khilifat Volunteer Corps, which represented the Moslem contribution to non-co-operation. This motley throng was officered by Indians in weird uniforms, wearing Sam Browne belts and carrying swords. They carried banners, and their headquarters amassed lots of money from sympathizers all over India who imagined that England had some hand in the removal of the Khilifat from the person of one individual to another. These same people probably believe now that the introduction of the bowler hat into modern Turkey is an instance of English commercialism, contrived to make rich the hat manufacturers of Luton.

But the subscribers to the Khilifat fund had a nasty shock a few months later when account was taken of the stewardship of the officials who administered the cash. No accounts had been kept which were capable



of being audited, and the rupees had vanished—exactly where has not been explained to this day.

So for a while non-co-operation held sway, and the police could do little or nothing, for Government would not move. Loyal Indians were intimidated and despairing, and Europeans were becoming restive and inclined to take matters into their own hands.

Then, at last, the Bengal Government acted. The Khilifat Corps was proclaimed a lawless association, and disbanded, the members' lethal weapons were confiscated, and the law prohibiting the carrying of such was strictly enforced. The headquarters of the Khilifat Committee was raided, and once again the Calcutta police force took full charge of the streets in northern Calcutta, where for a time the non-co-operators had held sway, even to the extent of attempting to control the traffic!

Matters came to a climax about the time the Prince of Wales was due to arrive in India. Gandhi was still at liberty, and his followers believed that the Viceroy was afraid to imprison him, and for a time it indeed appeared so. But Lord Reading, who had spent his first year as Viceroy of India in taking careful stock of the situation and in giving the non-co-operators a sufficient length of rope, suddenly acted. Gandhi was clapped into jail through the instrumentality of the Bombay Government. It was done very quietly, because certain people were fearful of riots and widespread trouble in consequence. Nothing of the sort happened.

It was a bold stroke and it fell at just the right moment. The non-co-operators were flabbergasted. The more ignorant of them never credited that their Mahatma could be taken at all, much less confined in a human prison. And even when he was known to be inside, these poor people believed that the walls would fall down and release him did he so desire. But nothing happened, and soon their disillusionment was complete; their idol remained, but he had shrunk to human proportions. He had been taken to prison like any other law-breaker who



is caught and sentenced. Moreover, he stayed there. As a political force Gandhi was discredited thenceforth. As such he remains dead to this day. His ultimate release, after a serious operation which nearly cost him his life, had no effect on the political situation. But as a holy man his spiritual teachings are still listened to with respect by all Indians. His life is pure and Spartan in the extreme ; his transparent sincerity is admired by all Europeans who know him, but he is not of the stuff from which great political leaders are made. His plane of thought is other-worldly ; impractical of realization his ideals in modern India have proved to be. Gandhi is to all outward signs an extinct volcano, though the hidden fires of fanatical idealism still burn within his frail body. India has disappointed him, and he has disappointed India.

With Gandhi's incarceration a new leader of Swaraj arose.

In Bengal, a province of lawyers, there was no cleverer man than C. R. Das. His practice at the Bar was a large one ; his skill as a counsel second to none in the country. And, in company with many other Indian lawyers, C. R. Das had relinquished practice as his part in the non-co-operation movement. Apart from their common belief in Swaraj, Gandhi and Das were as the poles asunder. Das was as practical a man as Gandhi was a dreamer. And Das was very much a man-of-the-world. No one was more amused than C. R. Das when, on a memorable occasion, Lord Olivier went out of his way to canonize him during a speech delivered in the House of Lords. Saints were out of fashion just then in India, and C. R. Das never even posed as one. An opportunist ? Yes ; for with Gandhi out of the way the ambitious lawyer saw his chance and at once grasped it. Putting himself at the head of a group of advanced Swarajists, who had all along been impatient of Gandhi's unpractical leadership, C. R. Das announced a policy of aggression, and advocated entrance to the councils, with the avowed intention



of actively obstructing the Government there by every possible means.

He obtained an immediate following, and succeeded in carrying the party with him. He it was who organized the Swarajists to such purpose that they won that election of which I have already made mention; it was he who engineered the capture of the municipalities, and it was C. R. Das who shortly afterwards became Mayor of Calcutta. In addition, he was the acknowledged political boss of Bengal and the chief driving force in the Swaraj movement in all India.

His move in negotiating the purchase of a daily paper gave his party a formidable weapon, and at the same time smothered an organ which had been favourable to British interests. He dropped the name of *Indian Daily News* and rechristened it *Forward*, and saw that it lived up to its name. It became a bitter opponent of everything British and was always in hot water with the Government. Its former features of interest disappeared overnight and it was henceforth merely a political paper, badly printed, carelessly edited, but withal an exceedingly useful weapon to boost the new policy.

C. R. Das always dressed in *khaddar*, the national homespun worn by all Swarajists, and his ample proportions were frequently to be seen compressed into the small dimensions of a decrepit Ford car, in which he drove about surrounded by secretaries and servants. His lips were stained with the red of the betel-nut, which, like most Bengalis, he chewed incessantly, and he went about bareheaded for the most part, his iron-grey hair close cropped and bristly, his spectacles for ever on his nose. But C. R. Das overworked himself, he was here, there and everywhere. Leader of the Swarajists in the Bengal Legislative Council, Mayor of Calcutta, proprietor and editor of a daily paper, and adviser to the All-India movement, constantly travelling and speaking; it was too much for a man of even his abnormal powers.



And, of course, he made mistakes. His really fatal error was in the Tarakeshwa sensation, when he championed the cause of a dissolute Indian priest, or *Mohant*, as such are called. This man had charge of a Hindu temple, and riots broke out in the vicinity when the simple people who worshipped there discovered that matters, both morally and financially, were not as they should be. C. R. Das backed the wrong horse when the *Mohant's* religious superiors sought to set right the irregularities by installing another priest. The Swarajist leader made fiery speeches, and enlisted many thousands of young students to form relays of apparent devotees, who tried in vain to reach the precincts of the temple and capture it again for the benefit of the deposed incumbent. It is the fixed principle of the Indian Government to protect the religious places of the Indians, and the police were forced to arrest large numbers of the rioting students. Much hubbub was created in Bengal over this matter, which had a decided political flavour, and when at last C. R. Das made some sort of arrangement which benefited his party's funds, and agreed thereupon to drop the protest, large numbers of his followers were disillusioned.

This matter of Tarakeshwa was branded by Lord Lytton, then Governor of Bengal, as a fraud from start to finish, which home-truth further annoyed the Swarajists, as they now knew that they had been hoaxed by C. R. Das. His power was waning, and for a long time he had been a very sick man, suffering from diabetes. The end came suddenly, in 1925, and though C. R. Das was much mourned by the party there is little doubt that the Swarajists had found out his true worth as a leader. An opportunist every time, his death undoubtedly made for peace and a better chance for rational Indian opinion to assert itself.

Since the passing of C. R. Das the Swarajist Party has been very indifferently led, and has steadily lost power and influence. More than that, it has been found out.



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I venture to predict that its days are numbered, so far, at least, as its more pretentious ambitions are concerned, and a steadily growing body of sane Indian opinion is surely undermining the work of the extremists. The elections which were held during the latter part of last year, while not going completely against the Swarajists in every province, lost them many seats. Bombay went heavily against them, and their plight was even worse in the United Provinces, while in the Punjab their numbers were reduced to a mere fraction. Assam would have none of them, and the party's only real triumphs occurred in Bihar and Madras. In particular the Swarajists' loss of seats in Bengal must have been a bitter pill for the leaders to swallow. The net result of the elections gave India a more representative class of legislator than had been the case in previous elections; there are now fewer firebrands and more representatives of the landowners and the commercial community—those Indians with a stake in the country. Also some of the new members are genuine social reformers, who may be expected to take a real and personal interest in the well-being of their constituents.

The Swarajists fared no better in the Legislative Assembly than they did in the provincial councils, for in the Assembly they lost one-third of their strength and with it the power of effective obstruction, so that, taking it all in all, India is showing at long last some spirit of responsibility, and may eventually be ready for the self-government which the Reforms heralded. Whether or not an extension, or an enlargement, of the scheme will be attempted by the British Parliament, in the specified year of 1929, remains to be seen. That the matter will come up for review in that year is already provided, but any chance of an earlier review of the situation is now extremely unlikely, especially as the Indian National Congress at its last Christmas sitting again endorsed, by a large majority, the complete Swarajist



programme, which comprised the non-acceptance of office and the refusal to vote supplies until Government makes what Congress considered a satisfactory response to the demands of the extremists.

It remains to be seen how closely the elected Swarajists stick together in the newly elected councils. The verb "to rat" is not altogether unknown even to India, and I should not be at all astonished to find a number of secessions from the ranks of the extremists as the fateful year of 1929 approaches.

With this reflection I gladly leave the subject of Indian politics, for it is a childish game as played there at present, and one of which you have probably already heard more than enough.



CHAPTER V

Influence of the Cinema on Indian Life and Thought—The American Stranglehold—Incitement to Crimes of Violence

FOR a number of years past, India has been the dumping ground of the sensational type of film by American film producers.

Their endeavour has been to get rid of their less valuable and desirable pictures to inexperienced exhibitors, for screening before audiences which consist very largely of wholly illiterate people.

The effort has, on the whole, been very successful. From the commercial point of view these film producers have done very well indeed. Of course they care nothing for the evil influence which such films have upon those who see them. The American producer is a cute business man, out for profit only, and, encountering little or no competition on the Indian market, has been able successfully to dump his rubbish on an easy and profitable market.

Unfortunately he is not the only one who believes that anything is good enough for the East. In reality no greater fallacy exists, and the effect of screened pictorial lies has already done much damage, and continues to exert a really disastrous influence on British prestige in our Eastern Empire.

But who in England really cares? Press and public alike appear indifferent to this aspect of the film problem. India is so remote; we at home are not interested.

Yet these foreign films are only too often a direct incentive to lawlessness. Dacoity (robbery with violence) committed with the aid of motor-cars has of late years been introduced into India. Is this to be wondered at when the American film has shown, most thoroughly, how simply and easily the thing can be done? Bands of



lawless Indians now haunt the great cities and commit robbery with violence, using American cars and American firearms in the manner illustrated so clearly in American productions.

There are also other types of films no less objectionable from the standpoint of all Europeans in India, both official and non-official. For some time I was engaged in censoring films for Government in Bengal, and in the course of my work saw many thoroughly vicious films, some merely indecent, a few wholly unnatural.

Such were, of course, immediately banned, but as each province in India has its own censoring authority it is quite possible for a film which would be banned by a strict censor in one province to pass the less particular censor of another.

As an instance of the ignorance, or callous mentality, of some producers, I will give a brief description of one film which was imported into Bengal and produced before me in the usual way, with the request for a certificate authorizing its screening.

In this film was depicted the daring theft of a baby-girl by a gorilla. The hideous animal carries off the child into a near-by jungle, leaving its parents distracted. The mother goes out of her mind, and the father vows vengeance on all monkeys, declaring that he will shoot every one he sees in the future.

In the latter part of the film is shown the arrival of a curious type of individual, which turns out to be the offspring of the gorilla and the child whom he had carried off years previously.

Now, this subject is horrible and unnatural enough in all conscience to show even to European audiences ; how much worse to try to screen such a story before Indian audiences who still have some respect left for Europeans, and who hold the monkey in veneration and are forbidden by their religion from killing such animals in any circumstances !

Needless to relate, this film was banned immediately,



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though the importer was far from pleased. He showed me a written report from his New York agent stating that the film in question was suitable in every respect for screening in the East. Ignorance, combined with carelessness, some would call it; I consider such action nothing short of criminal negligence.

It is difficult to conceive the mentality of a producer who accepts and screens such a plot to start with, let alone to imagine the mind of the agent who sends such a picture to be screened in India, of all places.

To realize the importance of this question of the domination of the film business in the East which America undoubtedly exercises, it must be appreciated that illiterate Indians form the vast bulk of the population of the country. And by illiterate I do not mean they are unable to read and speak English; I speak of a total inability to read and write their own, or any other, language. So it follows that they are quite incapable of reading those strangely worded captions which appear with most films and purport to explain their meaning.

But if the Indian cannot read or write, there is nothing the matter with his eyesight, and no reading leaves so strong an impression as is recorded by effective pictorial display.

Although the need for good British films is only now being fully realized at home, the subject has agitated European residents of India for very many years past. And the reasons are very strong ones.

The cinema plays an important part in the lives of the peoples of the East, and although I am here referring especially to India, it is none the less true of such places as the Straits Settlements, Egypt, Burma and Hong-Kong, where the prestige of Europeans must be upheld.

In India to-day there are some two hundred cinemas scattered throughout the country, besides numerous travelling portable picture-shows, the owners of which wander about screening pictures, in many cases certified



by no censor at all and which may quite likely be of an objectionable character. Thus it is that literally millions of illiterate people see films at regular intervals week by week, year in and year out.

The chief trouble comes about because those Indians sincerely believe that what they see on the screen are not merely pictorial stories, but actual scenes taken from the daily lives of Europeans in their own countries and homes.

Neither can the Indian differentiate between a British and an American film, for the Eastern mind works somewhat in this way: British people are Europeans; Europeans are white people who speak English; Americans also are white people who speak English; therefore English and Americans are one and the same.

As I have mentioned elsewhere, the Indian cannot understand the real meaning of "European." The word to him means—"a white person who speaks English."

It naturally follows from this way of reasoning that the American film is also British, and this belief is strengthened because the actors and actresses on the films, their mode of life and clothing, are all very much alike. They are just *sahibs* and *memsahibs*, to the illiterate Indian.

India to-day is surfeited with films depicting foolish wives, faithless husbands, gorgeous interiors of palatial mansions, scenes of gross extravagance and lawlessness—all of American origin, but, according to the Indian's way of thinking, undoubtedly British.

Nor is this misconception wholly confined to illiterate Indians, for I was once told, in all seriousness, by an educated and clever Indian business man that he was convinced most women in England went to bed each night in an intoxicated condition. When I denied this he remarked:

"But I know it is so, I see it so often on the films!"

This filmed display of loose living, senseless luxury and fabulous wealth, with which so many foreign films



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are saturated, is doing a serious amount of harm to British prestige in India.

Remember that 95 per cent. of the films shown there are of American origin, the remaining 5 per cent. being made up of German, French, Italian and British, as well as a few locally made pictures by Indians which are of a harmless nature, and deal in the main with stories based on Eastern mythology.

Europeans in India live in the midst of a population composed of many different races and castes. Films which could without serious objection be shown to Western audiences are quite unsuitable for screening indiscriminately before mixed Eastern audiences.

Of course the existing censorship can, and does to a very great extent, prevent the worst type of film being shown. But what the censorship is quite powerless to prevent is the screening of a film merely because of the false atmosphere which permeates it. Foreign films are naturally, and often deliberately, saturated with a foreign atmosphere.

Displays of luxury and licentious living, flaunted before large audiences whose minds are already only too full of discontent, the seeds of which have been sown there by interested agitators against law and order, are harmful in the extreme. It is fatuous to argue, as some still try to do, that as long as there is liberty allowed the vernacular Press to exaggerate and misrepresent facts, there should be equal liberty to screen pictorial untruths. The illiterate Easterner has a very sharp eye, though he may not be able to read.

You have only to watch him at a cinema—as I so often have done—to note how quickly he appreciates what is being screened. His own women are *purdah* (veiled from the sight of other men), yet for a few pence he can revel in pictures of scantily dressed European women, and, in many foreign films, may watch them become intoxicated also.

Is it therefore any wonder that the Indian nowadays



is so inclined to look upon Europeans as a living sham? He sees what is to all appearances the home of the average *sahib* and *mem-sahib* in England, and jumps to the conclusion that life in England is rotten to the core.

Good British films are needed to correct this wrong impression. The European audiences are always asking for pictures with an English atmosphere which will remind them of home. The Indians deserve to be shown the real thing: let them be taught something of the simplicity and sanctity of the average English home; let them see the beauties of our fair countryside, the cleanliness and order of our great cities and seaside towns. At present such pictures are confined to the altogether too short Topical Budgets. These news pictures are most popular with all classes in India, for they show actual happenings at home to the exile, and for him take first place in all programmes.

A great market exists in India, and the East generally, for good British films. At present it is, like England itself, in the grip of the American octopus; but the results in India are infinitely worse than here. European patrons of cinemas want British pictures, and importers are willing to show them, provided they are good pictures. But they have not always been good, and the idea that anything is good enough to send to the East is still unexploded in some quarters.

This is something the British film industry must live down, for it is only by sending out the best and most up-to-date productions that home manufacturers can hope to capture this very desirable trade. It is worse than useless to try to work off old stock and second-rate pictures on the Overseas market. And films must be sold at a really competitive price, which will yet show a good profit to the exhibitor.

The East has been sufficiently exploited by our rivals: let British companies now come forward with a first-class proposition, and, though it will take time and cost money, the result will be a gradual loosening of the grip



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which America now has on the Indian market, and a healthy reaction in favour of British standards in our Eastern Empire.

Although public interest is now much concerned with the question of censoring films sent to India, little or nothing is known as to the means adopted there in carrying out such censorship.

When the Government of India passed the Cinematograph Act of 1918 it was left to the various Provincial Governments to determine how the Act should be worked. Each individual province set about the matter in a different way.

The Government of Madras left the matter entirely to the police to manage, whilst in Burma a Board of Censors worked in conjunction with the police. Very little censoring has to be done in either of these two places, and the original arrangement still stands.

The Government of Bombay appointed a Board of Censors, which consisted of five representative citizens, with the Commissioner of Police as President and an *ex-officio* member of the Board.

A full-time officer, who combined the duties of Secretary and Chief Inspector of Films, was appointed, at a salary of Rs1000 per month, rising in time to Rs1250 by annual increments of Rs50 per month. This gentleman was a European and had as his assistants three Indians, who acted as Assistant Inspectors of Films at salaries of Rs300, rising by increments of Rs50 to Rs500 per month. All were given travelling expenses, and, with slight modifications, this arrangement still stands.

The method adopted by the Government of Bengal was somewhat similar, save that the Act was worked rather more economically, the work of censoring films being left to one European Inspector at a salary of Rs600 per month, rising by annual increments of Rs50 per month to Rs900. An allowance of Rs150, for the upkeep of a motor-car, also was made.



The Bengal Board of Censors is presided over by the Commissioner of Police for Calcutta, one of the deputy commissioners acting as Secretary, both being *ex-officio* members of the Board. The other members are seven representative citizens of Calcutta, nominated by the Government of Bengal. All members of the Board, including the President and Secretary, receive Rs16 for each meeting of the Board which they attend, and also on those rare occasions when they deem it necessary to view a film themselves which has been adversely reported on by the Inspector of Films.

The endeavour all along has been to make the Censoring Department pay for itself out of the fees charged importers of films for the censoring and granting of certificates.

Unfortunately Government levied a duty of 20 per cent. on all imported films only about a year or two after the department really got going, and this additional levy on importers, coupled with the general trade slump, hit the cinemas pretty heavily. A considerable falling off occurred in the importation of films, the amount of censoring necessarily diminished, and the sums realized in fees failed to meet the expenses of the department. This applied to both Bombay and Bengal. But once again the two provinces tackled the problem in quite different ways. Bombay paid the deficit from public funds, while Bengal abolished the post of full-time Inspector of Films and appointed a part-time man, on a salary of Rs250 per month, with no allowances, to do the work in his stead. Necessity for rigid economy was very apparent at the time, and the Government of Bengal did not feel justified in applying public funds to support the censor's department.

But the principle was wrong ; for the trade depression did not last for ever and the work of censoring films is an important public service. The exhibitors objected, as did the public, for the new arrangement operated against their business. With the whole-time Inspector importers



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were able to have their films censored at any time in the day which suited them best, whereas with the new method they were called upon to show their films at an hour which suited the part-time man, who had, of course, to fit in the work with his other Government duties. Loss of time in censoring topical films affects seriously their value, and there are many other instances, of which censoring is but one, which have shown the folly of adopting a penny-wise-pound-foolish policy in Bengal.

If film censoring is necessary at all it should be most carefully attended to. Both the India Office and the Government of India have always laid great stress on the importance of this work. It is not reasonable to expect the censoring of films to be entirely self-supporting, nor is it wise to refuse a grant of public money to support a very necessary public service.

It is high time that the whole subject of censorship in India was reconsidered. The matter concerns India as a whole and should not be left to Provincial Governments to interpret as they think fit. All Boards of Censors should be placed on an equal footing, both as regards their constitution and the pay of inspectors.

Inspectors of films should be carefully chosen, and when appointed should be held directly responsible to Government; their pay should be sufficient to attract and hold the most suitable type of men, and their security of tenure should be as certain as that of any other class of covenanted Government servants. At present they hold office at the pleasure of the local Board of Censors and have no security at all.

The present system of film censoring is bad for India. It is also a hardship to importers to have a film held up and banned, at great loss to themselves, chiefly owing to the ignorance and carelessness of agents in the country of the film's origin.

Why should not Government Film Censors be stationed in the countries where the films come from, or, if this is not practical, why should not there be at least a



Government censor in New York to see all American films destined for India? This would deal with 95 per cent. of the films imported into India, and certainly all the most doubtful. The censor's certificate granted in New York would be necessary to allow of any film's admission to India. Without it the thing would be excluded as undesirable.

If this method was adopted all censoring of films for India would be of the same standard. The present system is unfair and unsafe, cumbersome, and expensive to work. Besides all this, it is largely ineffective, and the cause of endless complaints by Europeans in India, which find frequent expression in the columns of the Press, and in resolutions passed by religious and social bodies.

Films of Indian manufacture are few and far between. For the present these could be censored by the police in the place of origin.

Sooner or later—and the sooner the better—it appears to me that some drastic change must be made in the method of censorship, for there can be little doubt that the prestige of Europeans who reside in India, and of the British Government itself, is being slowly undermined by the pernicious influence of bad foreign films.



CHAPTER VI

The Hill Stations of Northern India—A Trip to Darjeeling

EVERY European in India hopes to make holiday at one or other of the hill stations at some time during his residence in the country. Some manage to go every year, and almost all contrive to visit the Hills on at least one occasion.

Simla is perhaps the best known of all the hill stations of Northern India. It is here that the Central Government spend the hot weather, pending the completion of the new Delhi, where millions of pounds are being spent in a great official headquarters. It is a city in itself, and one of the principal excuses for the expenditure is a praiseworthy attempt to keep Government officials at work in the Plains under the best possible conditions that skilled architects and builders can contrive. It is intended that the expensive exodus to Simla will in future years be avoided altogether.

Darjeeling is another very popular hill station, and during the hot weather in Calcutta the Government of Bengal invariably go there, while the Assam Government make their headquarters at Shillong, a charming spot in the Himalayan foothills.

But Mussoorie is perhaps the most generally popular of all hill resorts, although for Europeans who live in Bengal the journey is a long and tedious one. In Mussoorie alone, of all hill stations in Northern India, can visitors enjoy their pleasures outside the orbit of officialdom. No Government summers there, and Mussoorie is therefore not taken possession of by Government officials as such.

Still, Darjeeling remains the most accessible of all hill stations to the majority of non-official Europeans. It is



a pleasant spot, notwithstanding the annual story of its departed glories, the reported bad cooking and discomfort of its hotels, and the lack of sufficient centres of attraction. You speak of a place as you find it, and I shall give you my own experience of Darjeeling. It will serve to give people at home a very fair idea of the Hills in general, and the sort of holiday which their friends in Eastern India will likely be having during October.

This annual holiday is to Bengal what the "Wakes" are to Lancashire. Holidays are great institutions in India, and in Bengal the *pūjas*, as this annual holiday is called, take up most of the month of October. Calcutta is deserted by Europeans, for they take the opportunity, afforded by almost complete suspension of business, to go on their annual vacation. Some go to Puri, a small seaside place quite near; others take a river trip; some go on shooting expeditions, but more go to Darjeeling than anywhere else.

And one year I went too. After the usual preliminaries, which are incidental to any journey, had been attended to, I found myself at Sealdah station and seated comfortably in the Darjeeling Mail.

The afternoon sun was hot on the carriages, even at 5 P.M., and the train was very full. We were soon speeding northward, enjoying a gorgeous sunset, reflected in great expanses of water spread over green fields of *paddy* (rice), the whole making a wonderful colour-scheme, which set me at peace with the world, and kindled joyous anticipation for the holiday which had now commenced.

The welcome call to dinner gave me an opportunity of seeing how quickly Indian servants could do things, if they were really so minded and handled in the right way. The *modus operandi* must for ever remain the secret of the Eastern Bengal Railway; all I can do is to testify to the results in a plain recital of facts.

I have eaten in many a quick-lunch establishment in America, yet have never seen anything to equal the speedy service rendered at that dinner. It was a



veritable whirlwind. There seemed to be four waiters to every table, and no sooner was knife and fork laid on a more or less empty plate than it was whisked away and a fresh course took its place. Some fellow in a hurry seated higher up the dining-car seemed to have set the pace. It was quite useless trying to eat at normal—or even double normal—speed. I tried it, and all I got for my pains was to see that which was destined to be my portion left neglected on one side to get cold, in which condition I ultimately received it.

I had hoped for an hour's comfortable dinner; in reality it took about ten minutes to get through that lightning meal. Yes, I know it was holiday time, and there was another sitting to be catered for, but there was a long and weary journey of many hours' duration ahead of us.

I reckon that dinner lengthened my train journey by fifty minutes.

Apart from this little grouse I have nothing but praise for the Eastern Bengal Railway. Such politeness and efficiency as were accorded passengers have not their equal anywhere else in India.

Although it was a crowded train it was not uncomfortable, and I found my name carefully inscribed on each seat I was to occupy at different stages of the journey. We had one change only—at midnight.

At Siliguri there was a halt of sufficient duration to enable passengers to partake of a substantial breakfast. Then those of us who had so arranged beforehand transferred ourselves and our hand-baggage to the little rail motor, which holds just nine passengers, and, proceeding well in advance of the ordinary mountain train, started to climb the Himalayas in the most comfortable way possible.

Siliguri lies at the foot of the hills; ordinary-gauge trains can go no farther, so here the Eastern Bengal Railway has its terminus.

The Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway is a triumph of



engineering. I was told that its construction was due solely to the perseverance of one man, who, alone of his contemporaries, believed in its possibility. He made the acquaintance of a sporting Marwari, who gave him financial backing—otherwise there would be no Darjeeling as we know it to-day.

Strange as it may seem, I did not feel the cold, though conscious of the keen and pleasant air, until an altitude of 5000 feet was reached. Then clouds were encountered; we passed right through them, and I was glad of the greatcoat I had brought with me.

This journey up the precipitous mountain-side was a progress through woodland scenery so beautiful as to baffle description. It must be seen to be appreciated adequately. We looked down from the little rail motor as one does from an aeroplane; it was really most difficult to realize that I was on *terra firma* at all. Great clouds of grey and purple were above us and below. Every now and then, on glancing down, a break in the clouds would reveal the earth, many miles away—at least, such was my impression.

As the car wound round the spiral rails we crossed and recrossed our tracks many times, and ever at a higher altitude. At length we reached Ghoom, the highest point, 7450 feet above sea-level. From there the track descended slightly, and a farther run of half-an-hour on the level brought us to Darjeeling, the Queen of the Himalayas, a good hour and a half ahead of the mountain train.

I must on no account forget to mention Kurseong, where we stopped for refreshments. Here I was re-introduced to bread-and-butter—the real thing—crisp, white, and with a tasty crust, on which the hill butter was spread thick and yellow. After years of poor imitations this appetizing combination gave me the first really enjoyable meal I had eaten for many weary months.

My first glimpse of Darjeeling will not be easily forgotten.



Little houses with red corrugated roofs were dotted all up and down a great wooded hillside. White, snow-capped mountains towered in the far distance, their lofty peaks floating on billowy waves of cloud; while to my right hand the sky spread out, a vast expanse of azure blue.

At the hotel I found a hearty welcome awaiting me, and a cheery fire in the grate of my comfortable bedroom, the verandah outside commanding a priceless view of the snowcapped hills.

But what a climb it was up from the station for one accustomed to the flatness of the Plains, and a Calcutta dweller at that, who had walked barely a mile a week for months past! I found myself puffing and blowing like a grampus within two minutes; and by the time I reached the hotel I was properly winded.

Of course one soon gets used to the hills, which is as well, for Darjeeling is all hills; you are either going up or down them all day long. This exercise in itself makes the holiday worth while, for you are obliged to walk, unless you care to be taken for an invalid and go about in rickshaws continuously. To my mind this savoured too much of decrepit old age, and I accordingly left them alone.

Then of course there are the hill ponies. They are usually patronized by people who have never ridden anything before more frisky than a bicycle. Some of the scenes I witnessed were distinctly comical, though one nearly ended in a tragedy.

Almost every visitor to Darjeeling joins the Club as a temporary member, for a more jolly or useful institution could hardly be imagined.

The building itself is very compact, its rooms cosy, and its life altogether delightful, as amusement forms its chief attraction. There are good tennis courts, and all members have a chance of playing—if they wait long enough. It took me back, in fancy, a good many years to find a roller-skating rink in full swing again. The



pastime was very popular at Darjeeling the summer I was there. The ball room at the Club is unique in possessing a spring floor—the only one, I believe, of the kind in India. There are always plenty of dinner and after-dinner dances going on at the Club, as well as at most of the hotels.

I found the experience well worth while to journey the five miles to Lebong on a race day, of which there were several during the holidays. The ride itself is a very pretty one, along a well-made road, with towering hills on the one side, from the banks of which hang long evergreens of great beauty, while on the other side spreads a glorious expanse of valley, separating the road from the mountains in the far distance.

On arrival at Lebong I found a small saucer-like track, round which the little Bhutia ponies galloped, several laps to each race. They nearly always got away in a bunch, and the fellow on the rails most frequently won, unless he turned giddy and was forcibly bumped over the rails. This happened on more than one occasion.

The jockeys are mostly hill boys, very youthful, and up to all sorts of tricks. The occasional grown man who gets a mount has all his work cut out to equal the youngsters. A few bookmakers stand up at these races, and a small totalizator is operated in addition. But the chances of making money at Lebong races are small in the extreme. Horses and riders are understood best by the local inhabitants; the casual visitor would be well advised to limit strictly his investments.

There are several ways of getting to Lebong, perhaps the most favoured being that of a rickshaw. This journey, especially the return trip, is a stiff one, and four hefty men are none too many for the job of dragging the heavy carriage and a couple of passengers. These sturdy hill men earn every anna of the ten rupees charged for the double journey. Many people go on ponies, and many more walk by steep paths through the hills; this



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is a much shorter journey than by road, and the climb back provides the greatest possible amount of exercise in the shortest possible space of time that I can recollect enjoying.

Mount Everest is visible from Darjeeling on a clear day, but if you wish for the finest and most romantic view of the world's greatest mountain, without becoming an actual mountaineer, you must go to Tiger Hill, and arrive there by sunrise.

I did not take the trip, being somewhat lazy and quite satisfied for the time with the numerous distractions which Darjeeling provided. But an hotel acquaintance of mine, an American who was touring the whole inhabited globe in the shortest possible space of time, was more energetic. He told our party at table one day that he was determined to reach the top of Tiger Hill by sunrise, and obtain the best view of the world's highest mountain.

He was missing next day, but turned up the day after at dinner as usual, a sadder and wiser man.

It appeared that at 3 A.M. on a bitterly cold and misty morning he started out to accomplish the promised journey. He travelled in what is known locally as a "dandy." Now a dandy is a sort of small canvas bath strapped on top of two poles and carried on the shoulders of four stout hill men. It looks something like a canoe, of the covered-in variety; it has frequently been likened to a coffin, though in all probability it is less comfortable. So you will see that the expedition had nothing very festive or lively about its start. That dandy must have looked particularly gruesome and ghost-like in the mist at three o'clock in the morning.

The American, in describing his experiences, called it "the chair of torture." He also "guessed" it was an invention which was handed down from the Spanish Inquisition.

Anyway, he was a good judge, having spent six weary hours therein on the outward journey, as the men wended



a tortuous way up hills, which threw the passenger on his neck, and then down steep inclines, which shot him back to an upright position again. Through the clouds and mists and the damp intense cold, which chilled him to the marrow, he was borne, willy-nilly, on and still on. Turning back was out of the question; on and still on he went, frozen but undismayed, for ever buoyed up by the hope of the wondrous sight which awaited him at the end of it all.

At last the summit of Tiger Hill was reached. The daylight broke. He saw clouds and clouds, and still more clouds, but never a glimpse of Mount Everest.

Disgusted and disillusioned he returned wearily to Darjeeling, enduring once more the chair of torture, and spent the next twenty-four hours in bed.

It was a piteous story, yet for the life of us we who listened to it that dinner-time could not refrain from seeing its humour. But the American could see nothing funny about it, and was thoroughly put out over the whole business. Which, after all, was not to be wondered at. Next day he was quite himself again; but he never again referred to Tiger Hill in our presence, and two days later returned to Calcutta to continue his world tour. Should this story meet his eye I trust he will forgive the humour I found in its recital and laugh with the rest of us at what was, after all, a humorous incident once its unpleasant actualities were over.

Had the morning been fine and clear a good view of the mountain would have been possible. But, even so, I doubt whether the tedious journey is worth the sight afforded of the sun's rays turning the snows to a rosy hue and glinting on the summit of Mount Everest, showing clear against the sky-line, far, far, away.

I was afterwards told that the best way is to journey at evening the four or five miles to Senechal, put up at the *dak* bungalow, and turn in after dinner, to be awakened in time to complete the climb on foot by sunrise. Even so I was not ambitious to make the trip alone, believing



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that pleasant company has a lot to do with the joys of every successful climb of Tiger Hill.

The blessings of Darjeeling are numerous, and include the total absence of mosquitoes and other winged pests which inhabit the Plains. Thus I needed no mosquito net to protect me at night; it was a treat to lie in bed and sleep in a cool and refreshing manner again—something I had well-nigh forgotten how to enjoy after years in Mesopotamia and Indian plains. How great was the luxury of once more being able to push my feet down quickly into cold sheets and enjoy the subsequent reaction of grateful, glowing warmth. How welcome the complete absence of the teasing electric fan; how cheery the open grate, with its sweet-smelling wood fire, the dancing shadows bringing me dreams of home. It was all very good, and very English. No wonder I returned to the Plains feeling refreshed in mind and body.

A word or two about the people of the Hills, for they are worth a mention. It is a well-known fact that hill-people are more or less alike the world over; all have similar traits and characteristics.

In the Darjeeling district I was much struck by the similarity of the people to those who inhabit Kurdistan. The same sturdy, strong men, self-reliant and fearless of aspect; the same method of carrying their burdens, suspended over the back from a strap supported from their foreheads; the same dark-haired, blue-eyed women and children, often surprisingly handsome, cheery and happy, full of humour, are a welcome contrast to the gloomy and sullen people of the Plains.

There were Tibetans, Nepalese and some Gurkhas, all with the Mongolian type of features. Some of the rickshaw men looked almost like Chinese. The women are very picturesque, their native dress of bright colours contrasting pleasantly with their long plaits of coarse, dark hair.

Darjeeling is well worth a visit; and to any intending travellers to the Hills I advise their taking plenty of



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warm woollen underclothing. And put some of it on before reaching Siliguri, for though you may not by that time feel the cold, the cold will feel you. Should this happen, and you are not well protected, an internal chill may result, which will bring on more than usual hill sickness.

Take my word for it, for the consequences of such a chill, if not really serious, are, to put it mildly, decidedly unpleasant.



CHAPTER VII

Woman's Life in India—Home and Servants—Shopping—Occupation—Exercise—Children—Milk—The Butterfly Life

BROADLY speaking, European women in India may be divided into two classes : those who are or have been married, and those who most assuredly will marry. The old maid simply does not exist, and the modern bachelor girl is content to retain her title only sufficiently long as is necessary to demonstrate her prowess as a free agent ; she relinquishes her title in a love set to the first worthy male challenger who comes along. Doubles are on the whole more interesting and much less fatiguing. Besides which one can flirt with a much greater sense of daring and diminishing responsibility, for husbands in India are notoriously considerate and understanding.

India may well be considered the happy hunting-ground of the single girl, for if she comes out reasonably fresh from England, is amiable, moderately pretty, witty, and not withal too wise, the odds are strongly in her favour that just as soon as she wishes she will attain her heart's desire. And the permanency of the joy will last as long in India as in other places. It mostly depends on herself.

One hears on all sides a bemoaning because of the lack of paid domestic helps in the homes of England ; those Europeans who live in India are envied their many servants. The English bride will feel joyous at the prospect of the numerous retainers who, in India, will be at her beck and call. On her first arrival in the country she may be somewhat overwhelmed at the number of her servants, and feel most important because of their apparent obsequiousness. They are the old and tried



servants of her husband in his bachelor days, have grown accustomed to his ways, and within reason carry on pretty much as they please. But be under no illusions ; for all their *salaams*, and expressions of goodwill and willingness to minister to the wants of their new mistress, these old servants are none too pleased with the new regime. They are nervous of the *mem-sahib*, shy of being found out in those little failings of omission or commission which the *sahib*, through inability or indifference, was glad enough to overlook. Also there was in those days but one to obey and serve ; now there are two. The *sahib* being out all day, probably using his home merely as a place wherein to sleep and store his possessions, meant long hours of leisure for his servants. Now the *mem-sahib* will be at home a great deal, and will likely, at first at all events, busy herself inspecting the house and its fittings, looking for dust and other signs of uncleanliness which show up so clearly under the strong sunlight which on most days floods the house. And that kitchen, into which the *sahib* never under any possible pretext set foot, will no longer be immune from inspection. Abdul and Mahomed sigh deeply in their beards ; as likely as not they must now look forward to lengthy days of unremitting zeal and labour, their afternoon sleep severely curtailed, and the visits of relatives will be neither so lengthy nor so frequent as of yore.

But it is in the matter of the daily catering, to which the *mem-sahib* will likely bring a trained mind, that the servants have most misgivings. The cook up till now has had full power, and has made convenient and lucrative arrangements with vendors of food-stuffs in the bazaar. Now, in all probability, the *mem-sahib* will wish to take the car and go shopping in the market herself. Or even if she does not, she will at least keep careful check on the stores and discourage the acquisition of those many perquisites which the cook has come to consider his rightful due. Truly, times have changed for the worse.



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All this of course provided the new mistress takes life sufficiently seriously to look after household matters personally. If she does, her first few months may well prove rather troublesome, but in time matters will adjust themselves and a state of open warfare will give rise to one of armed neutrality. And although the husband will be very loth to part with old and trusted servants, he may find such action desirable if the course of married life is to run smoothly. We take the line of least resistance in hot countries, and it is better to sack one's servants than to live in an atmosphere of marital discord, should such an unhappy alternative present itself.

Women, when they come first to India, do not, as a rule, realize the distinctions of the various castes from which their servants are drawn; neither do they realize that Indian servants will perform only those duties which their individual caste restrictions permit. Let me illustrate this point by a true story.

The newly wed wife of an officer arrived at a military station and had a number of servants placed at her bungalow in the cantonment. One was an orderly, a high-caste Brahmin, who stood within the compound ready to carry letters and messages. One day the *mem-sahib* gave an order to this servant, which the man refused to obey. The lady abused him, went off to her husband and demanded punishment for the man. An inquiry followed, in which it transpired that the order given was to the effect that this Brahmin was to go forthwith to the pigsty in the rear of the compound and give it a thorough cleansing.

It is needless to say more to those of my readers who know India; but for the benefit of the uninitiated it is well to explain that the servant's caste forbade him to touch a pig in any circumstances, and as for cleaning the sty, the mere idea was revolting and impossible! Cleaning was no part of his duties. A low-caste man, known as the sweeper, is attached to every household on



purpose to perform such menial tasks ; no doubt he was available had he been sent for, but the newly arrived *mem-sahib* had imagined that any servant would do, and had called on the first one she saw.

This story went the round of the station, and the lady had to put up with a good deal of chaff : her husband was not so lucky, for he was sent for by his colonel, and spent an unpleasant ten minutes defending the ignorance of his wife. Of course he should have told her about such things. Perhaps he had.

It may be useful here to give a list of the various servants which are necessary to a household in India and to indicate their duties, for many more servants are necessary than would be the case in England. Not that a multiplicity of domestics makes for efficiency, for often the whole lot of them will do no more work collectively than would one or two good English servants. But we have no choice in the matter.

The average small household in the East must employ a cook (*bawurchee*) and his mate, for the kitchen ; a valet (*bearer*), to attend to one's clothes and person ; a butler (*khitmutgar*), to wait at table and attend to drinks, etc. ; a washerman (*dhobie*), for laundry-work ; a water-carrier (*bhisti*), to fetch your bath water, and maybe your drinking water too if you live in a place where water is not laid on to the house, and a sweeper (*mehtur*), to do all the most menial work. If you keep a horse or a motor-car a groom (*sais*) will be necessary, and if you keep dogs, a boy (*koota-wala*) will be needed to clean and exercise them. Should your bungalow boast a garden no one will tend it save an Indian gardener (*malee*), while the gate of your compound will quite likely be guarded by a watchman (*durwan*), who spends most of the day doing nothing most industriously, and whose obese proportions, scantily clad, rise from a trestle-bed to salute you as you wander home late at night.

If you are married, a maid-servant (*ayah*) is almost a necessity, most assuredly if there are children. And, in



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houses where no electric fans operate, a punka-puller (*punka-wallah*) will sorely be needed, probably two of them, for you will need a punka day and night in the hot weather. I had almost forgotten the scullion (*mushalchee*), for no self-respecting cook and his mate will function properly in the kitchen without someone to wash the plates and dishes for them.

At the lowest computation this small army of servants will cost you £18 to £20 a month in wages alone; but actual money paid out is only a portion of your responsibilities. You are an adopted father and mother (*ma-bap*) to all your servants, whether you like it or whether you do not, for the doctoring and care of them all, and of their numerous relatives and hangers-on, is assumed to be your personal care.

Most of the servants will be married, and when babies arrive, these are brought to you for inspection and to be received into the orbit of your beneficent influence. You are constantly being asked to provide work, or at least to recommend for work, some one or other of the crowd which shelter behind your name and reputed influence and generosity. You are seldom free from verbal requests and written petitions, for your servants imagine you to be all-powerful, and expect you to be able to produce jobs as easily as a good conjurer produces rabbits out of an empty hat.

One of the disadvantages of life in the East is the total absence of personal privacy accorded you in your own house. No room, no time, is sacred to the Indian servant; he is always at your elbow or just outside the door. Passages are his hiding- and sleeping-places; your kitchen is his drawing-room, for there his relatives—and their name is legion—come to visit him, to smoke their evil-smelling tobacco, to chew betel-nut, and to gabble incessantly.

Requests for leave of absence are frequent; the real or supposed illness of relatives is the excuse most favoured, and such leave is usually taken by members



of your establishment with or without your permission. Meanwhile a mysterious "brother" turns up to carry on the duties of the absent one, and usually contrives to do considerable damage and annoy you by making endless mistakes during the tenure of his unwelcome visit.

It is difficult when engaging an Indian servant to be certain that his credentials are genuine. He carries round with him a bundle of papers which are known as "chits." These purport to be expressions of opinion on the character and attainments of the holder, given him by former employers. Such are not always genuine, and even when they are authentic one is never sure that these "chits" refer to the individual who presents them, for servants quite unblushingly exchange "chits" with one another, or even hire them for the occasion.

In Ceylon a system of Government registration is in force which compels all servants to be registered and carry a service-book containing the name and photograph of the owner. In this book are set down the reasons for discharge from previous situations, the wages paid, and other useful details. Employers are bound to fill in such details when servants leave their employ, and it is also illegal in Ceylon to employ a servant who fails to produce his registration-book. It would be well if this excellent system could be extended to all other Eastern countries, and especially in India would the idea be welcomed by Europeans.

I have said much about servants because efficient servants mean a great deal to European women in India, if only for the unfailing interest which their sins and virtues evoke at any gathering of *mem-sahibs*. They will chat contentedly for hours on this fascinating topic without any fear of brain-fag, while in fancy the shades of a revered and respectable South Kensington for a while soften the brilliance of a too searching Indian sun.

Before leaving this subject I must pay tribute to the Indian cook, who is a very marvel of resourcefulness. He can always be relied upon to provide a good dinner for



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any extra number of guests, at a moment's notice. He will likewise contrive to procure the requisite additional amount of crockery and cutlery for an emergency. How he manages it remains one of the inscrutable mysteries of the East. One just leaves it at that, questions being neither asked nor expected; though, should all the bungalows in the neighbourhood chance to be invaded by guests at the same time, an adequate explanation might be forthcoming without any need of inquiry.

Women feel the heat of India to a greater extent than do men. I think the reason for this is that men forget their discomfort in the absorption of their daily work in the office or mill, while most women find the day long and well-nigh unendurable in a temperature which remains around 100° in the shade for months on end. Having little to do, the average woman spends her time during the hot weather in brooding over her physical discomforts. Her life becomes a burden to herself and a trial to her friends; her temper frays, and her oft-consulted mirror reveals fading charms, due not so much to the climate as to a discontented and unoccupied mind.

Women miss the work to which they were used in England. In India much of the housework is taken out of their hands, and rightly so; but nevertheless there is much to be done in other directions, only it is so fatally easy to drift, to become idle alike in brain and finger in a languorous tropical atmosphere.

My advice to women who go to India is to have a hobby, and cultivate it assiduously. It may be needlework, photography, writing, study, reading, or some other congenial light occupation; but whatever it is, make up your mind from the very start to set aside so many hours every day to its pursuit. For preference select that unpleasant time between two and four-thirty each afternoon when the temptation to sleep creeps over one. Sleep by all means if you are thin and wish to put on flesh, although this is usually the very last thing which women seek to acquire. Afternoon sleep is conducive to liver



and obesity, so avoid it as you would the plague should you wish to remain slim.

Adequate and regular exercise is most important. Luckily, tennis clubs abound in all parts of India and the game is played extensively by both sexes. Some women play golf, but the game in India is much more popular with men. Riding is excellent for those women who are able to indulge in the exercise, but in these days it is rarely that one can afford both horses and a motor-car, so it is usually a motor-car.

And then of course there is dancing, the exercise most favoured by women in general these days. But it is foolish to limit one's exercise to the confines of a ballroom. Get out into the open air early each morning before the sun has come to its full strength. A brisk walk with the dogs will do the *mem-sahib* a world of good, and if she can induce her husband to go also so much the better. His liver will be certain to benefit from a shaking up early in the day. If it is only for an hour you will come back ready for a good tub and a change, which will give you an appetite for breakfast and a more healthy outlook on the world in general and yourself in particular.

Shopping is a fascinating pastime to women the world over. India will prove no exception to the newcomer, although the Indian bazaars will pall in time when the first glamour passes away. I believe the New Market in Calcutta is about the largest bazaar in the country, though that of Bombay must run it close, in size and interest alike. Smaller bazaars up-country will be found more typical of the East, for they are primitive and Oriental. In Calcutta, for instance, you will find the New Market a great covered single-storey structure, spread over an area of several acres and crowded with small shops set close to one another. These shops are rented from the Calcutta municipality, which administers the New Market, and bring in considerable revenue to the authorities.

All the shopkeepers speak English, and from the



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moment of your entrance you are pestered to buy ink, pens, notepaper, books, scent, soap, and all kinds of other things, as you walk casually along. If you pause for a moment you are lost, for although you protest ever so strongly that you need neither writing materials nor cleansing articles, the importunate shopkeeper will not take the slightest notice. He continues to extol his wares and insists on quoting a price, stepping in front of you and barring progress. To get rid of him you will say "Too much money." Promptly he will reduce the price, maybe by as much as fifty per cent., and in your astonishment you will accept. Before you can change your mind he will pop the goods into the basket of the nearest coolie, a small crowd of whom have been hanging round ever since you entered the market, and you will have paid up and pressed on, the coolie following with your unwanted purchase.

You are now surrounded by a crowd of hangers-on from the neighbouring shops. To judge by their suggestions it is assumed that you possess nothing in the world save what you stand up in, for there is nothing too personal for them to thrust on your abashed gaze. Corsets and lingerie are dangled in your course as you proceed slowly through the crowds which throng the market at most hours of the day. On every side shrill cries endeavour to attract your attention by proclaiming the excellence and cheapness of their vendors' goods.

"Beautiful soft shirts for the *sahib*!" yells one, as he flourishes a misshapen garment beneath your very nose.

"Silk stockings for the *mem-sahib*," cries another, "very cheap; on this day and for you only Rs2 a pair."

They look it, and you pass along without yielding to the temptation. Your male escort is by this time becoming rather annoyed, and wishes himself well out of it, wondering vaguely why he was overpersuaded into bringing you to this place, which he loathes with a truly masculine hatred. He angrily tells the crowd to *jore* (go away), and the nearest



of them sheer off a few paces, only to surge back upon you once again like a relentless sea. You smile encouragingly, and are the more determined to proceed on your tour of exploration because of his impatience.

At every hundred yards or so a blind beggar, or one covered with loathsome sores, is led up to you. He is usually naked, save for a loin-cloth, and carries a tin suspended from his neck by a cord. You grab hastily the first coin you can lay hands on and give quickly to be rid of the fellow. The crowd murmurs approval, and the good news spreads like wild-fire ; you are now trapped at every corner by one of his class, for word has gone round that a new *mem-sahib* is in the market, one who is charitable and an easy prey. Your soul wilts within you and an unaccustomed itching is apparent on your skin, so that you wish yourself well out of it all, though pride and curiosity impel you forward. And forward you go through section after section of the great market, where almost any commodity can be bought, both eatable and uneatable. Animals dead and living are presented to your gaze ; there is tropical fruit in profusion—bananas, oranges, guavas, grapes, pomegranates, great piles of sticky dates and basketfuls of nuts, all piled up in great banks on either side of the alleyway down which you walk. The floor is sticky and sometimes slippery with fruit juice, banana skins are on every side, inviting an inglorious fall, and the air is faint with the odour of fruit and naked bodies. It is a queer mixture of filth and beauty, typical of the East.

The heat is intense, and you long for a breath of fresh air, but you are in a maze, and it takes a long time for a new-comer to find a way out of the market. Your escort is now sullen and unhelpful ; he is determined you shall have your fill and to spare of the business, and seems incapable of finding a way out of the alleyways and buildings.

Your coolie, with laden basket, moves ahead relentlessly, guiding you to fresh sections of the huge market, while



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from either side of you appear fresh shopkeepers, eager to arrest your attention and take their share of your wealth. Round and round you go, past boot shops, ironmongery shops, bag shops and sweet stalls; past money-changers sitting aloft in their little cages, closely protected by iron bars from the curiosity, and possible dishonesty, of the thronging multitude. Piles of coins are at their feet and their fists are full of rupee notes.

You pass a group of letter-writers, their professional services busily engaged by squatting Indians patiently waiting while their thoughts are inscribed on paper. Petitions, business letters, love letters—all bring grist to the mill of the professional letter-writer. You will remember this when you receive in after days many petitions from your servants, couched in flattering terms and penned in faultless copperplate.

At last you see an opening into the street and dive for it, followed by a protesting mob. You reach the open with difficulty; but even now you are not a free agent, for a near-by *ghari* (a sort of open hackney-carriage) is brought up to the pavement by coolies, who stand on the steps demanding baksheesh for the duty only too gladly performed by the driver himself. You get in and your purchases are dumped on the seat before you, after your escort has seated himself by your side, smiling grimly. You pay the coolie and toss a few coins to the importunate crowd, the driver whips up his decrepit steed, which stretches its bony legs and lurches off at a painful shuffle into the stream of home-going traffic. So much for a new experience.

Another day you will make an expedition to the European shops. And you may with profit include in your itinerary those Indian shops which do business on European lines and store precious silks, jewels, carvings in wood and ivory, and the justly famous brass ware of Benares. In such shops you may examine all such things at your ease and not be plagued to buy. Some of these shops are to be found on the outskirts of the bazaar, but



they are so hemmed in by their cheap-jack neighbours as to be almost impossible of discovery.

And when, if ever, you go to Delhi, seek out the shops which specialize in ivory carvings of animals and such-like, for there you will find white elephants well worth possessing. Should you visit Simla be sure to secure some of those little terra-cotta models of Indian servants; they are extraordinarily well made and proportioned, while their cost is ridiculously low.

A shopping expedition in Bombay or Calcutta to the purely European establishments will astonish the new-comer to India. I will suppose that this time you go by taxi—a more swift and cleanly method than by *ghari*, though somewhat of an adventure if a wild Sikh should be at the wheel. Let him set you down in the centre of the European shopping area, then pay him off and continue your journey from shop to shop on foot.

You will be served by European or Anglo-Indian assistants with a courtesy and patience which is delightful. All the latest goods from England and America are to be found in the large stores, and some of these establishments are so large and lofty that you will find them but little behind London stores in size and resources. Especially at Christmas time some of these places are a veritable fairy-land, their many floors being gaily decorated in the time-honoured way; and if you have children they will find in the toy department a perfect galaxy of toys of all descriptions. There will be lions, tigers and horses, all complete with rockers or wheels; miniature motor-cars and games in infinite variety, while a live Father Christmas supplies a guaranteed lucky “dip” for a modest rupee. Yes, even in India your kiddies may have a bright and merry Christmas; and if they miss the conventional snow which is supposed to accompany the festive season in England, they will miss, and gladly, the rain and mud which are more usual these days. For the weather in India around Christmas is truly delightful; it is called the cold weather, and is about as cold as the most pleasant summer day in



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England. And if you really must have snow, a trip to some of the distant hill stations will give you as much as ever you need.

I have dealt at length with shops because so many people who stay at home imagine that India is a barbaric and wild country. Such folk should see these stores, with their electric lifts, their large brilliantly lit windows, and the cosy restaurants which at lunch- and tea-time minister to the needs of customers. It is all very homelike, and the enterprise of European traders in India merits the fullest possible support from their compatriots in the country.

And the smaller shops too will please you. There are hat shops, boot shops, leather shops, chemists, tobacconists, wine stores, booksellers, picture shops, and all the rest of those establishments to which you are accustomed. You may even get your hair permanently waved, and beauty parlours and manicurists are by no means unknown.

Which brings me to the question of health, and the possibility of living in the Plains during the hot weather. Time was when such a thing as an Englishwoman living in the Plains the whole year round was unheard of; married couples separated as a matter of course, and the wife went to the Hills while hubby remained behind, working extra hard in order to provide the wherewithal for his better half to enjoy herself in the salubrious climate of Darjeeling or Mussoorie.

The annual pilgrimage takes place to this day, but it is no longer universal. India is much more healthy than it was, and conditions of life in the Plains have greatly improved; so that unless a woman is genuinely ill or run down she can survive the hot weather just as well as can her husband. And even European children manage to thrive in the Plains, if properly looked after and subjected to reasonable precautions. Make it a household rule to boil all milk; see to this personally, for if left to servants, sooner or later they will forget, and the consequences may be disastrous. No food is so likely to harbour germs as does milk, and some idea of the conditions under which



milk in India is obtained will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Good water is obtainable in Calcutta and may safely be drunk as received from the tap, but in most parts of India it is advisable to boil all water which is to be used for drinking purposes. And where possible it is advisable to obtain your sodas from a reasonably safe source. In the large towns European chemists specialize in mineral waters and may be relied on to take all possible precautions in their manufacture. The Indian soda-water concerns provide cheaper sodas, but are not so particular regarding cleanliness.

The problem of keeping your house, flat or bungalow cool in the hot weather is worth mentioning. It is a mistake to imagine that open windows make for comfort for this is the case only at certain times of the day. In the early morning, and in the evening and throughout the night, by all means keep the windows open, but close them and draw the curtains from ten o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. By doing so you will retain the cool air in the house and shut out the warmth from outside. The electric fans, or hand-punkas, will keep the air circulating; and if a wide strip of matting is placed in front of the outer door, and kept moist by spraying water from a garden syringe over it at regular intervals, the hot air which rushes in when the door is opened will become cool and fresh ere it enters the house.

While life in the cities is very pleasant for women, and full of pleasing distractions in the evening, life in small up-country stations, or in places such as tea-gardens, where the planter and his wife, and perhaps an assistant, are the only white people for miles around, is apt to drag and become very monotonous. In such places a woman is thrown very largely on her own resources; she must make her own amusements or go without. More than ever is a hobby necessary in these far-flung posts, for she will be alone in the house for many hours at a time, and visitors are few and far between. What a boon the new broad-



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casting stations in India will be to those lonely souls in these distant places ! I was chatting with Mr Eric Dunstan at the headquarters of the B.B.C. just before he left for India to take over the position of General Manager of the new Indian Broadcasting Company, and we talked about the position of listeners in lonely places. I was glad to find that the new company recognizes its possibilities and responsibilities in this direction, and that the chances are that before long a series of stations will be in working order throughout India which will bring programmes of music and talks within the reach of everyone in the country. A start is to be made in Bombay and Calcutta, on a much more elaborate scale than the previous small stations, and a sort of Indian "Daventry" is to be set up which, it is hoped, will serve most of the country. It is quite likely that it will be found possible to relay programmes from England via Egypt, so that listeners in India during most evenings will be able to hear the afternoon programme from home.

The illness of a husband on a tea-garden will bring a wife plenty of responsibility, and work too. Such an eventuality is always possible, and it is well to be prepared for it, for if the *sahib* goes down with prolonged fever it is the *mem-sahib* who will be looked to for guidance, advice and help by the workers on the plantation. This sort of life will bring out the very best, as well as the worst, which is in a woman, and the prospect is not pleasant to contemplate for one who is happy only when leading a sheltered and comfortable city life. A woman in such circumstances must be prepared for the exercise of much self-sacrifice and forbearance. She must be capable of "holding the fort" in time of trouble, must be a real pal and helpmate to her husband, and, above all else, prove herself to be an Englishwoman in the very fullest sense of the word.

She must conquer her dread of loneliness, her natural fear of wild animals, her repugnance of those numerous creepy-crawlies which abound in the country ; and should



she possess some knowledge of medicine and nursing, so much the better. I know of a woman placed in these circumstances whose husband went down with fever and became delirious. While she was nursing him the noise of voices outside the bungalow drew her to the door. A worker on the estate had been bitten by a venomous snake, and, as no doctor was at hand, the terrified man had been brought to the bungalow for treatment. The *mem-sahib's* immediate help was needed, for the *sahib* was unable to exercise his customary resource, and in such an emergency every moment was of importance.

Though she knew well enough what treatment was necessary, the woman shrank from the ordeal. But she faced it; and though a few days before she would have been incredulous of her ability to do so, the emergency, when it came, found her unexpectedly calm and capable. Thus it was her hand which held the razor that made the necessary incision, slashing away the affected portion of flesh and cutting deep enough to release the poison in a gush of blood. And hers were the hands which finally dressed and bound the wound, and to her care and prompt action the man undoubtedly owed his life. So she "held the fort" and carried on the tradition of the *sahib*, he who was always ready for anything.

Such a case, while not usual, is nevertheless quite a possible occurrence in any isolated Indian station. Up-country life is most assuredly not suited to the purely butterfly type of girl.

Just now I mentioned creepy-crawlies. Besides mosquitoes, which thrive in all parts of the country to a more or less degree during most of the year, and in addition to those insects and vermin which are more or less familiar in England, you will find plenty of other pests. The black-beetle of India is always termed a cockroach; it is bigger and more hideous than the home variety, and is sometimes red and sometimes a whitish colour. It is a notorious disease-carrier, which creeps over food and makes itself generally objectionable. And it can



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fly; it is most disconcerting when one alights on you unexpectedly.

A very effective way to get rid of these pests is to place little piles of powdered borax, at night, in the dark corners and other places where they congregate. You will find lots of cockroaches flat on their backs, with their toes turned up, next morning. They seem impelled to eat the borax, and die literally on the spot.

White ants abound in many parts of India and are most destructive. They come up through cracks in the floor, and have been known to eat a trunkful of clothes in a single night! It is well to have your boxes, furniture, etc., made of teak, for this is the only sort of wood white ants cannot eat. And it is a good plan to set the legs of stationary articles in tins or earthenware jars, and to keep these filled with a mixture of oil and water. This will keep the white ants from climbing up and doing irreparable damage. A sure sign of white ants being present is a grey brittle deposit, of spiral formation, looking like frozen powder, which shows itself protruding from the joins in the floorboards or elsewhere, and sometimes standing several inches high. A liberal quantity of paraffin poured over this pile will do away with the ants, at least for a time. This may not be very scientific, but it proved most effective in my own bungalow. Of course there are many more insects, but you soon get used to them, and after a time repugnance gives place to a calm indifference. It is the only thing to do in the East.

How often does one need a trip home? That is a favourite question, and I always reply: "It just depends on the woman." If her general health is good there is no reason why an English holiday should be necessary for five years. On the other hand, a trip home every three years is necessary for some women, and very pleasant and beneficial for all. It is rather like discussing the buying of a new hat. It is not so often that a woman really needs one, she just wants one. And of course she gets it. How and when depends on purse and personality.



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I cannot close this chapter without insisting on the need for cultivating a cheerful disposition and making the best of things out East. There are many worse places, and the woman who considers it fashionable to be constantly grumbling at her lot eventually becomes a source of unbearable irritation to her husband and a bore to her friends. And her health is likely to suffer in the process, for a healthy and contented mind goes a long way in maintaining a healthy body, no less in India than in other parts of the world.

The woman who takes the trouble to make herself agreeable to her husband's friends and business acquaintances will find the effort well worth while. And it will sometimes be an effort, for some of the most influential men out East are by no means the brilliant conversationalists you might imagine. Women can do a great deal to either help or hinder their husbands' progress in the business and social life of the country. The fact that business houses in India prefer to enlist the services of bachelors rather than of married men, in these days, would seem to infer that in the past the women who have hindered have outnumbered those who have helped.



CHAPTER VIII

Calcutta's Night Life—Chinatown—European and Indian Theatres
—The Underworld of the Cities—Pavement Beds

NIGHT life in the large Indian cities is intensely interesting to the newcomer, and although this interest wanes as time passes, and you become used to the ways of the East, it never entirely departs from the soul which retains a spark of romance.

One thing is certain about this night life, and that is the undoubted safety in normal times which may be guaranteed Europeans in all parts of modern Indian towns, scaremongers who assert to the contrary notwithstanding. There is nothing to be feared from the narrow alleys of the local Chinatown, nor from the streets of the Indian quarter proper—no violence save the attacks of germs, and from these latter only aseptic bodies fortified by frequent vaccinations and inoculations can be considered reasonably immune.

Even should you be so hardy and unconventional as to prefer to venture abroad on foot, scorning the motor-car or the more humble *ghari*, it is extremely unlikely that any violence or rudeness will be offered your person, provided you behave decently and show a due consideration for the rights and prejudices of other human beings. The inhabitants of these crowded areas for the most part ask but to be allowed to live peaceably, and enjoy themselves according to their lights and in the manner prescribed by their ancestors.

The humble Indian's way of amusing himself of an evening is not likely to commend itself to European minds. To our way of thinking there is nothing particularly attractive in squatting on the ground, accompanied by one's friends, in a circle, with hard stones for cushions



and only the starry sky above for a canopy. Neither would the crude Indian drum, which beats a monotonous tom-tom-tom with a maddening and unfailing regularity throughout half the night, be considered by any of us as a welcome or suitable substitute for a good piano or a decent wireless set. Indians are simple folks, easily amused and satisfied; moreover they are in the mass very poor, earning as a rule barely enough to provide themselves and their dependents with the necessary minimum of food and clothing. True you may observe in your travels at night a certain number of fat *durwans* (doorkeepers) resting their ample proportions on trestlebeds and wrapped lightly in winding sheets which were once white. But their fat is more the outcome of a total lack of even the mildest form of exercise than the result of proud feeding. Rice is their staple diet, and even a very fat Indian can't make much of a splash on the equivalent of seven shillings a week and some sort of makeshift quarters thrown in.

These little parties may be seen in all quarters of Indian cities night after night; you will see them as you go to the theatre and they will still be there as you return home. For the European theatre is over by midnight, having started soon after nine-thirty; but the Indian theatres go on long into the early hours of the following morning. Indians love the theatre, and go as often as they possibly can afford. They sit in solid masses in a suffocating atmosphere while the long Eastern drama drags its weary way to a close. To the European such an entertainment seems boring and irritating to a degree, but Indians love these plays based on mythology, and are not critical of primitive scenery and slow action.

Unless such be dancing-girls, women are rarely seen on the Indian stage, all female parts being taken by male actors suitably made-up. Long speeches and a certain amount of knockabout fun are indulged in by the players, while the audience, not to be outdone, bandy shrill cries with friends or acquaintances in distant parts of the



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theatre, and at other times hold animated conversations with their near-by neighbours. While these pleasantries are being indulged in the play itself is of course totally ignored, and the unfortunate players struggle on, to all intents oblivious of their unappreciative and inattentive audience. One visit to an Indian theatre will probably suffice to satisfy the curiosity of the average European, for the plays being entirely in the vernacular will mean nothing intelligible to the Westerner; moreover the atmosphere will quite likely be considered distinctly oppressive, and somewhat ultra-odoriferous. Should you sample the Indian theatre you will get lots for your money, as the "show" will continue until two o'clock, or even later still into the hours of the morning, and you will come away dry inside but thoroughly wet as far as your outer man is concerned.

The European theatres in India are pretty much the same in architecture and seating accommodation as they are at home, and it is rare to find an Indian patron save a wealthy man who affects European dress. Europeans have these places practically to themselves, and it is entirely to them that travelling theatrical companies must look for support. The hour of commencement is considerably later than is customary in England; even so, 9.30 P.M. is apparently not sufficiently late for many people, and the percentage of late arrivals is very high, causing much heart-burning on the part of seriously minded theatre-goers, while these careless folk are the despair of the management and the players. Occasionally some strong-minded actor or actress comes along who insists on the doors being closed and patrons being refused admission while an Act is in progress. Miss Marie Tempest did this when in Calcutta, and after the first night there was very little trouble in respect of late-comers; but, alas! all actresses have not the drawing capacity of Marie Tempest, nor her independence, and to make such a general rule with all companies would probably have a really disastrous effect on the theatre which adopted it.



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The fact may be lamented, but it must nevertheless be accepted, that Europeans in the East refuse to take the theatre seriously, nor are many of them very keen on the drama. Rather do they wish for a light and cheery entertainment, something in the nature of a musical liqueur to round off a good dinner. They are apt to be captious and intolerant of any play that requires a certain amount of serious attention, and prefer the soft strumming of the Hawaiian steel guitar to the wit and sarcasm of Bernard Shaw or the subtle humour of A. A. Milne. Needless to say, the play or entertainment which savours of what is popularly known as "highbrow" ingredients is doomed from the word go, and the "tag" will be spoken to many vacant stalls, while the chinking of glasses in the theatre bar merrily tolls its requiem.

It is no easy matter for theatrical managements in India to cater for their patrons in these days. The position is well-nigh a desperate one. Costs of production have gone up immensely since those pre-war days when steamer and railway fares were sufficiently moderate to allow of good-sized companies being brought out, with an ample supply of "props," at frequently recurring intervals throughout the year. The increased rates of travel have naturally meant a certain increase in prices to the theatre-going public in order to allow the bringing out of any English companies at all, and this increase in the price of seats has acted to the detriment of theatrical business generally. Added to this has been the burden imposed by Provincial Indian Governments in the form of an Entertainment Tax, the net result being that theatrical enterprise has become more of a speculation than ever before. Profits have vanished and Provincial Governments have made more money out of the theatres than the unfortunate shareholders, so much so that theatrical shares are at a discount, and many quite unsaleable; for in the existing circumstances it is necessary to fill a theatre to capacity every night of the week, including Sundays, in order to show any sort of reasonable profit. That is, of course, a



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hopeless proposition, for the European residents are not all inveterate playgoers, and to go once a week is the most that the majority who wish to go can afford, as there are lots of other calls on one's pocket as well as theatres. Thus it is that many theatres are impossible, and the few that function are kept above water largely owing to the assistance rendered them by local amateur theatrical societies, who hire the theatres several times a year, and by societies who run locally organized concerts, and so on. These in most cases pay the theatres much better than do the visiting professional companies, and at the same time the amateurs raise a great deal of money for local charities, besides providing an outlet for the ambitions and legitimate aspirations of talented amateur actors and actresses.

The question of an orchestra is a difficult one in the East, for it is quite out of the question in these days for a professional touring company out from England to travel its own orchestra. The most they can run to is their own conductor, who may also act as pianist. He has to make the best he can of the orchestra at the local theatre, which usually consists of a scratch crowd of Goanese musicians, and their efforts, while praiseworthy, are hardly good enough to act as a requisite complement to the English company bringing out the latest musical comedy or revue from home.

Another source of trouble lies in the matter of lighting and in Indian scene-shifters. The local "limes" is apt to be a bit sketchy in his colour-schemes, and inclined to do things on his own, which make players turn green in more senses than one. So frequently there are many creaking hinges, and failures of all descriptions, at the first few performances, and even after a week or more of practice, when a certain standard of proficiency might reasonably be expected, some contretemps is almost certain to occur during the performance. Lights fail when most needed, or blaze out when a "black out" is signalled, and it is quite usual for the audience to be treated to the amusing spectacle of an Indian scene-shifter racing across the stage



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just as the curtain rises. It rather cramps the style of the actor whose entrance chances to coincide with the unconventional exit of his Aryan brother, though the incident provides the critic with suitable matter wherein to dip his vitriolic pen.

The difficulties with which actors who work in the East have to cope are often not sufficiently allowed for on the part of audiences. Take cities like Bombay, Calcutta or Madras, in May, when the temperature is very high and people's tempers are frayed and ennui is prevalent almost to the extent of total inanition. In such places and in such circumstances the actor, or actress, fresh out from England is usually off-colour for a week or so after arrival. Yet as likely as not they are billed to show almost immediately, and are expected by their audience to give a performance of the highest standard, for prominent in the stalls will be many people who saw the "show" at home and are only too likely in the mood to draw invidious comparisons. So then, here are these poor mummers, suffering from the bites of innumerable insects, and maybe in addition tormented by prickly-heat, their heads aching and with incipient fever poisoning the blood which courses hotly through their veins. Is it any wonder that with grease-paint melting on their brows, and finding its dripping way down stage-clothes meant for cooler climes, these unfortunate men and women sometimes forget their entrances, miss their cues, and muddle their words?

I recollect watching a performance in Calcutta of *French Leave*—most excellently it was acted too—and after the fall of the curtain I went behind to talk to the leading man. He had played the General, and was just free of the Sam Browne belt and thick khaki tunic. I assisted in stripping the dripping shirt from his back, when it was deposited in a bucket and removed for cleansing and drying in time for the next performance, it being the only khaki shirt available at the time. Such is the perspiration of the East, and although the audience is kept cool by the whirling of numerous fans, in all parts of the theatre, it is



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not possible to have fans working on the stage, and to work with verve and enthusiasm while the thermometer stands at 98° in the shade is a most exhausting procedure. Added to which, the very fans which cool the audience are an additional handicap to the players, for the whirling blades ruin the acoustic properties of the building, so that in order to be heard clearly the actors must speak in over-modulated tones. The strain on one's throat is thus doubled, and consequent loss of voice is very common.

The number of plays which have to be performed in a given time is much greater than in England, for in the East there is no possibility of any play, however good, running for months on end. The European population of any Indian city is so comparatively small that most people who wish to see a play do so at one of the first three or four performances, hence a week at the outside is the limit to which a play can run consecutively. Indeed in many cases there are two, or even three, changes of programme in a week, and in order to keep up this state of things during the month or six weeks a theatrical company will remain in Calcutta or Bombay it is necessary for the company to be called together for rehearsal every morning, including Sundays.

As likely as not the members of the company have had no previous chance of rehearsing together before leaving England, and the opportunities of doing so on shipboard during the voyage out are rather sketchy. I have even known of cases where a company has come out prepared to put on half-a-dozen selected plays, only to find on arrival that these very plays have been produced in their first city of call but a few months previously by another company. In this case a complete new set of plays had to be swotted up right away, though luckily they had one ready with which to open. Bad staff work, of course; but that is rather typical of the East in theatrical matters.

Really the only free time actors and actresses get in the East is the afternoons of six days of the week, for a



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Sunday afternoon matinee is quite the usual thing. True, there are times when travelling between towns during which idleness is imperative, but the conditions of Indian train journeys cannot by the widest stretch of the most lively imagination be termed pleasant or restful. The only chance of a good rest is when the company goes to Rangoon, for then they get three or four days on a comfortable steamer and, always provided the Bay of Bengal is in a good mood, a most enjoyable time may be experienced, for the Rangoon mail steamers are comfortable and the cuisine excellent in every respect. If the tour is extended to include the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay Straits, and from thence on to Shanghai, further pleasant periods of rest and recuperation may be looked for, and in the days when China was quiet a trip to Peking was usually included in the company's itinerary. But the long river journey there and back was often too much for the harmony of many theatrical companies, and not infrequently private jealousies and feuds had broken out between members of the company, and a return to work and civilization was almost universally welcomed, especially by the business members of the party.

As a welcome contrast to the hardships and trials of actors and actresses in the East, it must be conceded that residents in India and elsewhere exert themselves to a great extent to make pleasant the lot of the strangers in their midst. Theatrical folk quite frequently are made a good deal of by the more cosmopolitan residents of the city visited, and there are plenty of invitations to play golf and tennis in clubs and chummeries. Supper-parties after the show are also fairly frequent, and a hail-fellow-well-met spirit presides at such convivial gatherings. The ladies of the party assuredly have no cause to complain of any lack of attention on the part of local gallants, who are only too glad to make much of a girl fresh out from home. Nor is it entirely unknown for a contract to be broken and another of a different kind to be entered into by reason of such a friendship—a theatrical manager



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thereby losing an actress and a local business man gaining a wife as a result of the transaction.

I have said enough on the subject of theatres, and rather more than I had intended, but so little is known about the actor's life in the tropics that I hope to be forgiven by those few of the initiated whom I may have bored, my excuse being that, after all, theatres bulk very largely in the night life of any city, though certainly less in the East than the West. And the actor who comes East, while he is very unlikely to save any money, at least sees a good deal of life.

A trip to Chinatown is one of the night excursions which you certainly should not miss, on a visit to Calcutta at all events.

It is easily reached via Bowbazar Street, which is one of the main arteries of the city. Narrow winding streets, ill-lit and indescribably filthy, lead you past mean one-storeyed buildings to the quarter where John Chinaman resides with his family. The Chinese dwellings themselves, and their occupants, are clean and decent enough, and John himself is an exemplary citizen when left alone to ply his trade without molestation, either as a carpenter or as a shoemaker, at both of which he excels. True, his work costs more, but it is also worth very much more, than that of the Indian, for it is invariably well done, and completed to time, two little-understood qualities in India.

The Chinaman has small use for the Indian; he despises his competitor for his lack of enterprise and general inclination to indolence, his careless way of half-doing a job, and his utter indifference to the value of time. John Chinaman employs Indians as waiters in his restaurants, but the cooking and other really important work he does himself.

Chinese restaurants are popular as a novelty with the European residents of Calcutta, and it is quite the usual thing to make up a party, which may include ladies, to



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pay an evening visit to Chinatown. A motor-car can just contrive to negotiate safely the many turns and twists of the tortuous byways which take you into the quarter, and a spice of adventure is added if, as is quite likely, some of the party, although old residents, may be totally ignorant of the locality of Chinatown, for it is well hidden—though really one of the most accessible of Calcutta's night sights.

Time was, and that not many years ago, when the numerous gaming-houses, wherein are played *fan-tan* and other Eastern games of chance, were open to all visitors regardless of nationality. It is not so now, for European visitors did not always play the game and were apt to make their own rules. The Chinese quite naturally retaliated and there was a certain amount of trouble. So that nowadays, while the police allow John and his family to gamble to their hearts' content, no European may enter a Chinese gaming-house, even as a spectator, and the police are very strict about the matter of enforcing this decree.

Having arrived at the restaurant, a smiling proprietor welcomes the party, personally leading the way inside and conducting you to a curtained alcove. The seats are bare and hard, and the table is of plain unpolished wood, but the cloth spread thereon is immaculate, and you will find the fare provided to be of the very best quality, and wonderfully cooked. Pictures of beautiful English girls adorn the walls—the kind of pictures which were once so popular with the publishers of Christmas annuals—and a warm savoury smell of cooking pervades the place. A Chinese and also a European menu is presented, and the visitor is wise who makes his choice from the long list of Chinese dishes. These are novel, and each order is especially prepared, being placed on the table smoking hot, while the quantity provided will be found invariably ample for the combined appetites of two normal individuals. It is therefore quite the usual thing to order one portion for every two members of the party, and



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the restaurant proprietor takes no exception to this method of ordering.

Rice fried in the Chinese manner will be found particularly delicious, and to those of you who know rice merely as the chief ingredient of English rice-pudding this dish will prove a revelation ; and the curried prawns mixed with it may be eaten with a sense of comparative security, as for the nonce you can forget that these savoury morsels have most likely been retrieved from the disease-infested waters of the adjacent River Hooghly. You may at least be certain that the prawns have been properly cleaned and prepared by a cook who thoroughly knows his business.

Ordinary table cutlery will be found placed ready for your use, as well as the spoon and fork with which curry should always be eaten. Chinese chop-sticks are also provided, but their use is an art not easily or quickly acquired, so, if you like your food hot, and are at all hungry, it will be well to confine yourself to the use of the usual spoon and fork. The chop-sticks may be pocketed as a souvenir to be shown to admiring friends the next day.

Then to be thoroughly in the picture you should order China tea and drink it without milk or sugar during the course of the meal, and afterwards, if you are so inclined, you may drink something stronger, but only up till eleven o'clock, which is the authorized licence hour in Calcutta, for John is a law-abiding citizen and values his privileges much too highly to place them in jeopardy for the sake of a transient profit. The Chinaman in India never looks for trouble ; as a general rule he gives much less trouble to the police than do either Indians, Anglo-Indians, or Europeans. Of course John has plenty of opium for private consumption, and some of this may be obtained by him in ways which are not strictly orthodox, but that is quite another story.

In the mean streets which cluster round the Chinese quarter are small houses and hovels, many of which are



occupied by the very dregs of society. Here are now and again to be found Europeans who have sunk so low as to be almost beyond recognition. These men come from all sections of society; some are soldiers who have deserted from their regiments and have managed to elude both military and civilian police sufficiently long to be tolerably safe from recognition; some are stow-aways who arrived aboard a coasting steamer and got ashore with smuggled opium, of which they disposed only to find themselves caught in the toils of the owner of an opium den. There are sailors who deserted their ships; and cases have even been heard of where men who once held a decent position in the life of the city have sunk so low that they now hide in this underworld, unknown and unrecognized, long since mourned as dead by friends and relatives.

Sometimes these derelicts venture out into the European quarter and sleep on seats in the Eden Gardens at night, or on to the *maidan*, but are careful to return to their filth and their opium before ordinary citizens are about. The problem of these men is a hopeless one: reclamation seems out of the question, for when the opium habit grips a man he loses all sense of decency, and as in the East such men invariably "go native," as the saying is, nothing can be done for them; they are rarely seen by day, and at night-time they slink about picking up a precarious living in devious unsavoury ways, until they can no longer procure the wherewithal to provide themselves with the drug which has become their very life. Thus the end comes miserably and inevitably. These cases are of course exceptional, and I mention them in this part of the night life of Indian cities as a striking contrast to the gaiety and brightness which is so apparent on the surface of things.

All large cities have their brothels, and in India the policy of segregation has been adopted as the best solution of the problem. So the pimps and painted ladies



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are not much interfered with, as long as they keep to the quarter allotted them and do not make too great a parade of their business. People who drive round these districts know perfectly well what to expect in the way of sightseeing, and have only themselves to blame if they are disgusted with the scenes witnessed. Men are robbed if they walk these streets with pockets full of notes—one rarely looks for trouble without a certain amount of success. To drive round the Indian brothel area is to see tall houses the lower storeys of which have rooms plainly seen from the street. The windows are flung wide open, and iron bars run vertically from top to bottom, and each cage has its bird, arrayed in gayest plumage, singing to the passer-by in tones of engaging allurements. Brilliant lights are everywhere, and a babel of sound almost deafens the ear. There are no European women here, but in another part of the city stand quiet bungalows each in its own grounds; there are trees and comparative darkness and quiet, but at each gateway sits an Indian servant, who questions the lingering passer-by or calls to the driver of the conveyance. And if you wish to enter, the gates are flung wide, and welcoming figures come out to greet you. The women are European, but not English, and for the most part have lived a good many years in the country.

The condition of the streets of Indian cities at night may well amaze the newcomer, for in many places the pavements are made well-nigh impassable by reason of recumbent forms wrapped in grubby white cloth. At first sight you would take them for corpses, for the heads are covered to keep off winged insects, but if you watch long enough some slight movement will assure you that the body within its wrapping is a breathing human entity. They are for the most part men, and they have no other place in which to sleep than the public footpath. There they lie, not from choice but through sheer necessity. You would be astonished to know that, like as not,



one of these dirty sheets contains the man who delivers the provisions from some store or runs messages, or it may be he who delivers your ice or sodas, or, worst of all, he may be one of your own servants, or even your washerman.

Space is valuable in these days, and the landlord's profits more than ever necessary, so that both must be gained—even, if needs be, at the expense of human decencies. Hence it is that in these great Eastern towns modern flats, which tower as high as the local authority will permit, have been built, and in order to secure the maximum number of rooms and flats no accommodation has been allotted for servants' quarters. In less unhappy times, when commercialism was not so rampant nor competition so keen, each *sahib* had his own bungalow, complete with garden and compound, wherein were proper quarters for his entire staff. But in these days servants must find their own quarters, and although wages have increased very considerably the accommodation for the servant who resides away from his work is little, if any, better than of yore—it is certainly much farther away, too far in most cases to be of any practical value. And if it is difficult for the servant class, how much worse must it be for the still lower classes? They live like animals, for the most part, and nobody seems to trouble very much about it all.

Better housing for the poor is never an election cry on the part of aspirants for legislative honours, and the Indians who represent the districts wherein live these miserable people care little or nothing for their constituents' material welfare. No one outside Government circles even suggests any remedy for this lamentable state of things, and official wheels move even slower than usual when not lubricated by public opinion. Do not imagine, however, that it is entirely the fault of Europeans, for it most certainly is not. The filthy insanitary huts in the neighbourhood of the Bengal Jute Mills are owned and farmed by Indians, the majority



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of whom are substantial people in their own community. These Indians are not, and never have been, willing to sell their lands, nor to do anything to make the huts built thereon sanitary or decent. Although the jute industry has pressed for the grant of compulsory powers to enable them to buy such land, and erect sanitary buildings thereon, Government has never been willing to legislate to this end.

These are the conditions outside the cities, where land is less difficult to obtain, and in the cities matters are infinitely worse. The Indian landlord much prefers to erect large blocks of flats (and Armenians and Greeks and Jews are probably even worse in this respect), which will let at high rents and appeal to well-to-do Europeans, who from sheer necessity have to part with one-third of their monthly incomes in order to rent a place of very modest dimensions. There are few, if any, Europeans who own either land or houses in Indian cities, so that any charge of grinding the faces of the Indian poor must be laid at the door of their own countrymen.

It is little enough that you see of the lives of the poor people of Indian cities as you drive swiftly in a comfortable car ; but even so, at night-time, when you alight you must step warily for fear of falling over the prone body of some unfortunate human being whose hard couch is the very pavement you wish to cross. It is also the bed of the pariah dogs, while all around the rats make play, chasing one another across the prone bodies sunk in exhausted slumber.

If by some miracle all means of locomotion, save the ancient one of walking, were taken away from well-fed and well-housed men and women, and for a brief week all had to walk on their nightly travels, the pathos and misery of their fellow-human beings would come home to them with a force at present non-existent. It is an Indian problem. Indians are chiefly responsible, and until they feel and admit their responsibility the problem will remain.



I wish to end this chapter on a more cheerful note. The night life of a city conjures up visions of gaiety and amusement, light and laughter. Well, it is to be found, and is found, by the majority of Europeans who reside in one or other of the principal cities of India.

There are dances almost nightly at one or other of the principal hotels or restaurants, and in this connexion I would like particularly to mention Firpo's and Peliti's restaurants in Calcutta. In these places you can obtain as good a dinner, as well cooked and as nicely served, as even the most fastidious gourmet could desire. Both places run capital dinner-dances, and the bands which furnish the music are European, and play the most up-to-date music. You dine and dance in comfort, and these establishments are conducted in a manner which compares very favourably with the most famous London restaurants.

If you want a big dance hall with two bands, and an air of more boisterous revelry, the Grand Hotel will probably please you as far as Calcutta is concerned, and when I was last in Bombay it was to Green's restaurant that the cheery people resorted at night-time for a combination of good food and cosmopolitan gaiety.

Then you may dance before dinner at the Saturday Club, Calcutta, and sometimes after dinner too when a charity dance is organized there, for the floor is excellent and the amenities of the Club are frequently placed at the disposal of the organizers of local charities. It is here that a St Andrew's Day dinner is held each autumn, when all the Scotsmen attend, and half the Englishmen in the city who can get tickets. 'Tis a great night, and, if the pipers do not deafen you altogether before speech-making time arrives, you may quite likely hear some important political announcement from H.E. the Governor of Bengal, who invariably graces the proceedings with his presence.

Yes; there is plenty to see and do at night in these



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cities, and you may have just as pleasant a time as your pocket will permit, a much better time than the average man at home in a similar position ever has.

If you are keen on amateur theatricals you will find organized societies only too glad to welcome useful and talented recruits to swell their ranks. If you are a Freemason you will be glad to know that the craft is strong in India, and in the large towns fine permanent temples are the meeting-place almost nightly of some lodge or other. You may be a cinema "fan"; if so, you will find some excellent picture theatres, run on modern lines, and showing the most up-to-date pictures, in which you may spend your evenings.

Those Europeans who are at all public-spirited can find plenty of outlet for their energies in the activities of various political, religious and social organizations. The demand for assistance in these directions invariably exceeds the supply, for helpers are constantly dropping out. Leave home, sickness, death; removal to another part of India or permanent retirement to England—all these leave gaps which it is difficult to fill. There is plenty of room for helpers.

All this quite apart from the usual round of social evening engagements, which crowd upon the European in India whose circle of friends widens as years of residence accumulate in a particular city. Life can become a continued rush of activities if you so desire. You may be always busy, or you may prefer to vegetate.

Wise are those people who can hit on the happy medium. This is not easy, however, for those who are able and willing to work are allowed to do so, and find all the time more and more honorary duties thrust upon them. It is more so the case in the East than in the West, for helpers are less plentiful. The average man is inclined to put all his energies into his daily business, anything left over being devoted to sport. Thus he becomes prosperous and popular in his immediate set, though the net result is a very dull member of society.



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He knows and cares little what social or political upheavals are going on in the land which supports him. He lives in a groove, and his thoughts never stray far from his own immediate interests and personality.

Thus grows up that uninteresting self-satisfied type of individual; healthy, friendly, cheery to a point; but with no imagination and precious little soul; part animal, part mineral and part vegetable.

And the greatest of these is vegetable.



CHAPTER IX

Indian Native States—Abuses and Misconceptions—Dancing-Girls—The Passing of *Purdah*—The Emancipation of Women

WHAT are commonly known as the Indian "Native States" number about seven hundred in all. With certain exceptions, which are unimportant, these States are under the authority of the Central Government of India, to whom they are subject in varying degrees. Generally and practically speaking, however, these States are governed by their princes, ministers and councils. True, the Supreme Government has a Political Officer, either a Resident or an Agent, but he acts as an adviser to the Ruler, and keeps the Government of India informed of the general trend of affairs within the State.

It is only when some scandal rocks the throne of the ruler of an Indian Native State that you hear much of these vast territories over which the local Prince wields autocratic powers. These Feudatory States are outside the scope of the Reforms Scheme—which in itself forms one of the chief objections to the continuation of Dyarchy on present or extended lines.

The notorious "Mr A" case brought the Indian Native States into unpleasant prominence with the public a year or so ago, and this was followed by a crop of rumours regarding corruption and disaffection in several other States. The evil was so widespread and obvious that something really drastic had to be done; the very life-blood of the miserable taxpayers of these Feudatory States was being drained away, and for no better purpose than to provide callous and dissolute rulers with needless and senseless luxuries. It so chanced that it was not long before an opportunity presented itself for the Government of India to curb the preten-



sions, and practical outlawry, of some of the more careless of these princes, whose heads and money-bags had swollen to ridiculous proportions.

The State of Indore came strongly into the limelight by reason of a particularly daring crime by men who were afterwards proved quite clearly to have been emissaries of that State. A dancing-girl, called Mumtaz Begum, grew tired of life at the palace of the Maharajah of Indore and fled the State. She went to Bombay and became associated with an Indian merchant by the name of Mr Bawla. The girl lived under his protection, and the pair were often seen driving about the city in the man's motor-car. One evening the car was proceeding up Malabar Hill, the most fashionable part of Bombay, when the driver was held up by a band of men who proceeded to wrest Mumtaz Begum from the care of her protector and transfer her to their own car.

Bawla not unnaturally protested, and put up a fight in an endeavour to retain his prize. The ruffians promptly murdered the unfortunate man, and as the girl herself resisted strenuously one of the men slashed her across the face with a knife, determined to disfigure Mumtaz Begum's beauty if she would not accompany them. Just then a party of British officers came to the rescue; they were returning to Bombay from the golf-links and had been attracted by the girl's screams. Using their golf-clubs as weapons they attacked the murderers and managed to drive them off, eventually capturing two of the men when more help arrived, and the girl and the prisoners were taken into the city. Some of the rescuers were themselves pretty severely damaged in the *mêlée*, and the affair caused a great sensation when it became known that the assassins were men from Indore, several of them being in the personal service of the Maharajah himself.

The Government of Bombay took up the matter promptly; the whole case was carefully sifted, and a report sent to the Central Government. On this the



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Viceroy, Lord Reading, intervened and asked the Maharajah of Indore to submit to a full inquiry. This he stubbornly refused to do, pleading privilege and denying all knowledge of the affair at Bombay. The Government of India then sent him an ultimatum, offering the choice of a full inquiry or voluntary abdication of the throne of Indore. The Maharajah chose to abdicate and retired to Switzerland, and the actual murderers ultimately paid the extreme penalty for a deed planned by others.

A new Maharajah ascended the throne of Indore, and is now exercising power under the direct supervision of experienced European officials, who have been selected by the Government of India for this special work.

It is only in extreme cases such as this one that the Viceroy interferes, and it should be understood that not all viceroys have been as prompt and courageous as Lord Reading. Had this murder occurred in the State of Indore it would have occasioned little, if any, comment in India, and the people of England would have heard nothing at all about it. Most assuredly the Maharajah would never have been called to account. Even as it was, and happening in the capital of the Bombay Presidency, all possible obstacles were placed in the way of justice being done. The hanging of the actual murderers, and the forcing of the hand of the Maharajah, was only carried through by reason of the fact that the Viceroy himself refused to lend an ear to the importunings of many Indian princes, and other interested persons, taking no notice of the wire-pulling which went on day and night.

Indian rulers are practically all-powerful in their own territory. It is only when questions of political importance crop up in Feudatory States that it is usual for the Government of India to interfere in their internal affairs.

Europeans are few and far between in these Native States, and though in many instances their services are sought after, to fill important positions in the various



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State departments, British officers are very chary of accepting service under these Indian autocrats; service such as this can be made very unpleasant for Europeans, and their lives become a burden, if for some reason or other they incur the displeasure of the ruler of the State.

The life and person of a dancing-girl is of no more account to an unprincipled Indian ruler than is the life and person of a fly. If he wants the girl he takes her, by fair means or foul; his will is law, his every wish must be gratified. And the hangers-on at these Eastern courts are almost as privileged, for bribery and corruption are rife. Who pays for it all? The wretched subjects who owe and render implicit obedience to their Prince. These unfortunate subjects are mostly people of the soil—*ryots* as they are termed in the vernacular—and can hardly keep body and soul together, so burdened are they by heavy taxation. To pay these taxes, which they can so ill afford, these miserable creatures are kept in a state of abject poverty, while their rulers live in the greatest Oriental splendour in India, and in the most up-to-date European way when visiting London and Paris. Suites of rooms at West End hotels; fleets of luxurious cars; stables of well-bred, costly polo-ponies; boxes at the opera; special trains; millionaires' suites on ocean liners; valuable jewels for bestowal on the latest favourite; all these things, and much more, are purchased at the cost of the very life-blood of the unfortunate subjects of these often profligate and dissolute rulers.

What of the useless lives led by these Eastern potentates? How few of them realize the responsibilities of the great positions they hold! There are honourable exceptions; such men are well known and well spoken of throughout the land. It is of those others I write.

It is a fact that, although the cinema censorship is strict in British India, there is none at all in the Indian Native States, and this omission gives the opportunity



to some licentious rulers to indulge their depraved tastes in pictures of a wholly disgusting nature. These films, purchased on the Continent of Europe and smuggled into India, cannot be seen at all in England, and in Paris only by frequenting houses of ill-fame. The idea of white women posing, even in photographs, before coloured men is extremely repugnant to all right-thinking people of whatever nationality. It is particularly objectionable in India, where the white race rules more by example than by anything else. Yet in these Native States such films are frequently exhibited before a certain type of Indian, who can afford to pay heavily for the gratification of a lust which is satisfied with nothing less than the very worst the Continent of Europe can screen in the way of wanton obscenity.

Hence the low state into which British prestige has fallen in many parts of India and the East in these latter days. It is high time that a stricter watch was kept over the importation of such undesirable films, which, after use in Native States, are quite likely to be sent by devious subtle channels into British India itself.

Dancing-girls, such as Mumtaz Begum, usually drift away from their princely protectors in time. They then go to Bombay or Calcutta, as the two most thickly populated cities, and join the household of some wealthy Indian. For a time this endures, but the next step takes them to one or other of the numerous Indian brothels, where their bodies and fading charms are at the disposal of all and sundry who care to squander the price of a passing hour's shame on them. There is little doubt that in the past many thousands of common women have had their origin in the Indian Native States.

The economy "axe" has been wielded to some purpose in the State of Indore; already many reforms have taken place. Jobbery has been suppressed with a firm hand, and men who know their business have taken the place of ornamental officials who in the past



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received a maximum salary for the minimum amount of work and no sort of efficiency. Among the economies effected must be counted the dismissal of the many beautiful and seductive dancing-girls who were attached to the palace of the deposed Maharajah. It was high time, for they cost the State officially £4000 a year, though how much additional money was squandered on them annually will perhaps never be known. At all events, these girls will have enough money to live on for the rest of their lives, if they are content so to spend their time—which is highly problematical.

About the time when Indore was all at sixes and sevens, the State of Khairpur, in Upper Sind, to the extreme west of India, gave trouble. It is quite a small State—being only some 6000 square miles in area and with a population of only 250,000 souls in all—and its people were having to pay, and pay dearly, for the extravagance of their ruler, Mir Ali Nawaz Khan. He had brought the State to the verge of bankruptcy by appropriating the whole of the revenues for his personal use, completely depleting the treasury in the process.

The Mir had a passion for horse-racing, and gambled very heavily on the Turf. Like many a lesser light he was unlucky, and there came a time when even the whole of the State revenues were insufficient to keep the merry game going. Complaints of hardship and excessive, even bi-annual, taxation came to the ears of the Government of Bombay, who stepped in and deprived the Mir of Khairpur of his State powers. No longer are these unfortunate *ryots* and traders being bled to provide an afternoon's sport for a parasite who battered on their misery and squandered their hard-earned money.

The Government of India had shortly afterwards to turn their attention to the Naizam of Hyderabad—a much more difficult and delicate proposition. The rulers of the great State of Hyderabad have for generations past been consistently friendly and loyal to the



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British Crown, as far back as the days of old John Company and right through the Indian Mutiny. Indeed it is not too much to say that if at the time of the Mutiny the then Naizam of Hyderabad had turned against the Crown, in that great struggle, India would have been lost to the rebels.

Hyderabad is the most important and the largest of the Indian Feudatory States. Its area is 82,698 square miles—greater than the combined areas of England and Scotland—and its population is nearly 13,000,000 souls.

Hyderabad city is the fourth largest in India, and contains more millionaires than any other city in the world.

Close to the city are the remains of those diamond mines from whence, according to Hindu mythology, originally came the famous Koh-i-noor diamond. It was surrendered to the British on the occasion of the annexation of the Punjab, in 1849, and this beautiful stone now forms part of the Crown jewels.

The ruler of Hyderabad is the richest of all Indian ruling princes. He is entitled to a salute of twenty-one guns, and his names and titles are as follows:—Lieutenant-General His Exalted Highness Nizam-ul-Mulk, Naizam-ud-Daula, Nawab Mir Sir Usman Ali Khan Bahadur, G.C.S.I., G.C.B., Naizam of Hyderabad and Faithful Ally of the British Government.

Unfortunately Hyderabad, for all its ruler's high-sounding titles, has for years been known as the worst-managed State in the whole country. Ignorance, indifference and intolerance have reigned supreme, while British prestige has steadily waned, despite the presence of a strong British Resident. Europeans have been leaving the State gradually but surely, and whereas before the war all the principal administrative posts were held by Europeans, now Indians have replaced them, to the almost entire dislocation of all public services. The people became more and more like slaves, while corruption and jobbery took the place of justice,



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and in the last year of Lord Reading's term of office matters had reached such a lamentable state that the Government of India could no longer keep silence.

Accordingly, acting on suggestions emanating from the British Resident in Hyderabad, Government tendered friendly advice to the Naizam regarding the improvement of some aspects of the administration of the State—particularly in respect to the Police and Revenue departments. The intention was to assist the Naizam to bring his administration into line with modern methods, if necessary with the help of men who had Western experience to guide them in their efforts. One point Government laid particular stress on was the necessity for restricting the system of receiving *nazars* (presents made by an inferior on his presentation to a superior) and other “gifts,” lest the practice should deteriorate into a regular taxation.

The present Naizam is a proud and self-opinionated man. He resented what he was pleased to consider undue interference in the internal affairs of his State, and disputed the right of the Viceroy to demand any reconstruction of his State affairs. He went further. He demanded the reopening of a question which had been settled in the time of Lord Curzon and the previous Naizam. This question concerned Berar, a district extending some 18,000 square miles, larger than Switzerland or Denmark, and containing a population of 3,500,000 souls. This State was once part of Hyderabad, but for long past has been assigned to the British Government, or held in trust by them, to meet certain obligations of the Naizam's Government.

In 1902 the then Naizam agreed to cede Berar permanently to the British, in consideration of certain payments made by the Government of India. Now the present Naizam asked for this arrangement to be varied, if not revoked altogether. It was a clever counter-move on his part to endeavour to side-track the reforms advocated by the Government of India. In fact he



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challenged the whole right of British interference in the internal affairs of his State.

It was not easy or agreeable to quarrel with the Naizam. He had rendered great service to the Empire during the war. He gave £400,000 to defray the entire expenses of the 1st Hyderabad Imperial Service Lancers and the Deccan Horse. He contributed over £100,000 to the anti-submarine campaign and over £80,000 for war sufferers, which included a donation of over £6000 to the Lady Hardinge Medical College for Women at Delhi. And comparatively recently the Naizam royally entertained the Prince of Wales when he was in India, going so far as to relay the whole of the local *maidan* with turf in order that his royal visitor should have the best possible ground on which to play polo.

The Naizam's wealth is, of course, enormous; no one knows just how much he is worth, for his ancestors accumulated wealth for many generations. He is the principal Mohammedan prince in India, and the ex-Sultan of Turkey is indebted to him for an annual pension of £4000, and in addition to all this the Naizam restored the Mosque of Omar at Jerusalem, at a cost of over £7000.

Whether, having proved himself indisputably the faithful ally of the British during the war, the Naizam expected preferential treatment in consequence, over and beyond that accorded to the rulers of other Indian Native States or not, the fact remains that he thought himself on sure ground in disputing the British Government's right to interfere in the internal affairs of Hyderabad.

It thereupon devolved on Lord Reading to put him right on the matter. A quotation from the Viceroy's reply to the Naizam's demand explains most clearly and for all time the position of the British Crown in regard to the Indian Native States:

"The sovereignty of the British Crown is supreme in India. . . . It is the right and duty of the British



Government, while scrupulously respecting all treaties and engagements with the Indian States, to preserve peace and good order throughout India. . . . No succession to the Masnad of Hyderabad is valid unless it is recognized by His Majesty the King-Emperor: the British Government are the only arbiters in cases of disputed succession.

"The right of the British Government to intervene in the internal affairs of the Indian States is another instance of the consequences necessarily involved in the supremacy of the British Crown. The British Government have indeed shown again and again that they have no desire to exercise the right without grave reason. But the internal, no less than the external, security which the ruling princes enjoy is due ultimately to the protecting power of the British Government, and where Imperial interests are concerned, or the general welfare of the people of a State is seriously and grievously affected by the action of its Government, it is with the Paramount Power that the ultimate responsibility for taking remedial action, if necessary, must be.

"The varying degrees of internal sovereignty which the rulers enjoy are all subject to the due exercise by the Paramount Power of this responsibility.

"Other illustrations could be added, no less inconsistent than the foregoing with the suggestion that, except in matters relating to foreign Powers and policies, the Government of your Exalted Highness and the British Government stand on a plane of equality. But I do not think that I need pursue the subject further. I will merely add that the title 'Faithful Ally' had not the effect of putting your Government in a category separate from that of other States under the paramountcy of the British Crown."

This plain speaking on the part of Lord Reading quickly bore fruit, for the Naizam saw the falseness of his position and drew back before it was too late. Since then experienced European officers have been appointed



to some of the more important State posts, such as the Director-General of Police and the Inspector-General of Forests. The Finance Department has been overhauled and the whole system of internal government drastically revised. In fact, the Naizam agreed to carry out all the reforms enumerated by the Government of India. A weak Viceroy might have hesitated to have spoken thus plainly to India's paramount prince, but Lord Reading's utterance—framed with deadly logic and devoid of ambiguity—appealed to the Oriental mind. Indians cannot understand and have no respect for vacillation on the part of a European, although amongst themselves they practise the thing unceasingly. Lord Reading was respected by the Indians because he showed, kindly but clearly, that it was the intention of the British Government to rule as well as to occupy India.

The system of *purdah*, which prevails practically throughout India, is not as old as many people think. Surprise is often expressed at a custom which decrees that the women of an Indian's household should have their faces covered in the sight of all men, with the exception of their own husbands. Thus from very tender years girls are closely guarded, and on the rare occasions when they go out it is always in a closed carriage or car, and when they attend the theatre or cinema they are carefully shepherded in secrecy to a box, which is covered with a veil of black mosquito-netting, so that the audience may not be able to distinguish the features of the occupants.

Purdah came in those far-off days when the rich and warlike Nabobs of the north swept down and placed in thralldom the peoples of the Indian plains. Then the conquerors took whatever they fancied, and, manlike, they fancied youth and beauty, so that *purdah* was instituted in order that all women should look alike to the passer-by.

After the British conquest of India the system was



retained, and to this day every young Indian bridegroom has to take a chance as to the type of features which lie concealed behind the black veil that hides from him the face of his bride. Not until the knot is well and securely tied, and the bride at length reaches the house of the bridegroom, does he discover what fortune the matrimonial lucky-bag has in store for him. Then, be it for better or for worse, he can easily show a brave face to the boon companions of his recent bachelorhood, for none can say him nay if he protests that his lady's eyes are like the stars and that her face is like unto the full moon. For he alone knows.

Signs are not wanting that this system of *purdah* is, however, slowly but surely, breaking down, and for this state of things the political emancipation of women is chiefly responsible. It is of course only amongst the educated classes that this defiance of old conventions is at all noticeable, and it will be generations before the women of India as a whole are free in the same way that freedom is understood by the Englishwoman. But matters have already advanced to a much greater extent than would have been considered possible a few years ago. I rather think that another factor besides politics is influencing the most up-to-date of the Indian high-class families.

It is the question of mixing more and more with Europeans. As matters stand at present you may meet and talk with an Indian at various social functions. If a married man you quite likely have your wife with you. The Indian will almost certainly expect to be presented to your lady. This may, or may not, take place, but in any event there can be no return of the compliment, for there is no Indian lady for you to meet. She will be at home and *purdah*.

If ever there is to be a genuine attempt at fraternizing between European and Indian families it can never come about as long as this difference in customs prevails. True, your wife may visit the wife of your Indian friend,



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and the visit may be returned—but never in your presence. The European naturally argues that if he allows the Indian to look upon the face of his lady the least his Aryan brother might do is to allow him to look on the face of the friend of his wife and the wife of his friend. I may have put this matter in rather a flippant way, but nevertheless I honestly believe this distinction to be a stumbling-block in the improved relations which are desired between the better-class Europeans and Indians who dwell almost side by side in a country which, in many cases, is equally dear to both.

Still, I will allow that politics are at present the greatest factor in the gradual breaking down of the *purdah* system, and it is noteworthy that at the last elections a woman, Dr Parbati, was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council. She has the distinction of being India's first woman legislator.

For authority the Indian women's emancipation movement goes back to the days of ancient Indian civilization, when women had equal legal rights with men. Indeed they were sometimes political leaders, and stood by their men in times of national crisis. There is historic record of the bravery of the women of Rajputana, who on more than one occasion died in battle rather than fall into the hands of their foes. There have been great and wise Indian women rulers, and the mother of the present Maharajah of Mysore is a highly cultured and popular princess who, as Regent, administered her son's State for many years.

More or less the whole of India now has votes for women. Amendments to the electoral laws, which took place before the last elections, allowed the Provincial Legislative Councils to pass resolutions that women not disqualified could be elected as members.

The franchise movement first gained ground in some of the Indian Native States, and afterwards spread to the provinces of British India itself. Travancore, governed by an Indian princess, was the first place to



introduce the franchise for women. Other States followed suit, and even went further, by removing political sex-disqualification. In Mysore, where the influence of the popular Regent prevailed, the Maharajah granted the vote to women, with the full support of the Privy Council, in 1923. Madras and Bombay were amongst the pioneer provinces which followed that example, and Bengal finally followed suit, though at a much later date. This appears somewhat strange, as Bengal had always been in the forefront as regards the cause of women's education.

Women enfranchised under the property qualifications—which are the basis of the concession—do not number much over 1,000,000. But this proportion as against male voters is greater than appears on the surface, for it must be borne in mind that only 3,000,000 Indian women are literate, as compared with 20,000,000 Indian men.

This beginning thus constitutes as great a development as would be at all acceptable to large numbers of Indians of both sexes who are of the older generation and deeply rooted in many traditions which are threatened by these modern innovations. The vast majority of Indians view any scheme which will hasten the emancipation of women with the greatest possible disfavour, but against this many of the younger generation are absorbing the idea of a new freedom.

The professional Indian women are doing a great deal to help break down these prejudices in much the same way that happened in England. So greatly are medical women needed in India, where both maternal and infant mortality are extremely high, that the parents of high-class Indian girls are becoming reconciled to the idea of their daughters adopting this profession. A very important step in this connexion was the establishment of Lady Reading's College, which obviates the necessity of girls coming to England purposely to study medicine.



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In the political world there is really very little that women can do through the Provincial Councils in India, even if more of them succeed in becoming members. They can agitate against the exploitation of women and children in some industries, but social work, child-welfare and similar movements were in progress long before the vote was granted.

The need for educating their girls is impressing itself on many Hindu and Moslem families. Some Moslem girls no longer keep *purdah* when they grow up, while some attend school with Hindu girls, and the more strict are taken to school in covered-in carriages and motor-cars. Increasing numbers of Indian girls are being sent to school in England for their higher education, and this development has had the happy result of raising the marriage age—a most desirable state of affairs. A fund was started by a generous Bengali lady, who contributed £10,000, to found what is known as the Indian Women's Educational Association. Other subscriptions are all the time forthcoming ; so that from this fund is found the money to send, each year, a girl to an English college—such a one who could not otherwise afford the expense involved.

Things are moving in the East no less than the West, and, as usual, woman is having her say in the shaping of things.



CHAPTER X

Seditious Propaganda—The "Red" Menace to India—Riots and the Police—Indianization of the Services—Educational Problems—Churches and Foreign Missions

IT so happens that as I begin this chapter the menace of the Soviet to the United Kingdom, and especially the Empire overseas, is very much to the fore. A few weeks ago the Foreign Office Note to the Union of Soviet Republics was replied to in such a manner as to suggest a complete break, before long, in the diplomatic relations between the two countries concerned. And only recently I read the report of a speech by the Earl of Birkenhead in which he dedicated the remainder of his active political life to a fight against, and a ceaseless exposure of, "Red" propaganda within the British Empire. All Europeans who live and work in the East will wish the Secretary of State for India a long and active span in which to carry out his self-imposed task.

Public opinion at home is evidently becoming wide awake to the "Red" danger, and Mr Baldwin's Government finds itself stirred into action all of a sudden. On the surface it seems strange that this stirring up was necessary, seeing that the last Election was won very largely on an anti-Red ticket.

There was little sign that the threats of the Soviet were being taken seriously when I was in England during 1925-1926. Then warnings were falling on deaf ears, sedition was being preached quite openly in Hyde Park and elsewhere almost daily, and a regular outcry was raised in certain quarters when a few of the more daring spirits in the Communist Party were clapped into jail and served short terms of imprisonment. Their release was made the occasion of a large gathering in Hyde Park, when half the scallywags in London came



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together for the purpose of welcoming back these "martyrs" to further activities on behalf of the cause.

"It amuses a certain type of Englishman to play with fire; public opinion is always sufficiently strong and sane to estimate the words of such a man at their true value. The Motherland is quite capable of looking after herself—'Red' menace or no 'Red' menace."

So say the saner of the apostles of free-speech-at-any-price.

Maybe; but the activities of the Union of Soviet Republics cannot so lightly be dismissed when it comes to a question of direct interference with the populations of British possessions overseas. And the very last place where such interference can be tolerated is India and other of the Empire's Oriental possessions.

There are few students of world-politics who will be found honestly to declare a belief that the Soviet had not a great part in the stirring up of hatred against the British in China.

As regards India there are many and incontrovertible proofs that much of the unrest and sedition which has caused so great a loss of Indian life and Indian money, as well as continuous anxiety to the Government of India, is directly due to the secret working of emissaries of the Soviet. These agents of Communism have undoubtedly been financed by moneys sweated from the poor of Russia, that the men who hold them in bondage may spread their own pernicious doctrines, to the detriment of the peoples of another Empire. Not content with fouling their own nest these birds of prey are broadcasting filth throughout the world.

It may here be useful to give in brief the history of a young Indian, by name Abdul Hamid, who in 1915 was twenty-three years of age, and a student at Lahore Medical College. He and fifteen other students, finding the study of medicine not sufficiently exciting, ran away from college, and for the time being were lost to sight. They were next heard of when prominently associated



with some fanatical mullahs, who influenced these young men to proceed to Afghanistan and join the revolutionary "Army of God," which had been established there by a religious fanatic named Maulvi Obeidulla. At this time there was considerable unrest among the Mohammedans of India owing to the fact that the British Empire was at war with Turkey. This wonderful scheme had its being in Afghanistan, and owed its inception to a number of disaffected Indians resident in Kabul early in the war. Their avowed intention was nothing less than the ambitious one of emancipating India from British rule until such time as a permanent All-India Constitution was adopted.

In 1920 another *Hijrat* movement took place from India to Afghanistan as a result of the Afghan war, the Amir of Afghanistan having published proclamations at that time to the effect that the gates of Afghanistan were wide open for Indian Moslem emigrants.

A party of these emigrants, which included Abdul Hamid, left Kabul and made their way to the Bolsheviks' propaganda school at Tashkent. Here the Soviet had established an institution where renegade Indians were given military instruction at infantry and aviation classes. On completion of the course at Tashkent, Abdul Hamid was given the title of Lieutenant-Colonel in this revolutionary army and sent to Russia, together with a number of other Indians, where they all became students at the Moscow University for Workers of the East. There classes were especially arranged for the teaching of the principles of Communism, and the organization and development of Labour unions, with the object of defeating capitalism and securing the overthrow of capitalistic governments. There were several Indian ex-medical fellow-students at this Bolshevik University.

In 1922 a batch of Indian students from Moscow were dispatched as Bolshevik agents to India. They travelled via the Pamirs and Chitral, and Abul Hamid was one of



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them. After suffering great hardships on their journey, particularly over the Pamirs, one party was intercepted and arrested at Chitral. Its members subsequently were all tried and convicted. The other party, which included Abdul Hamid, was arrested by the Afghan Government on crossing the Afghan frontier. Abdul Hamid, who was well known to his captors, was released, and made his way back to Moscow, where he completed a second propaganda course at the Bolshevik University. Later he made another journey to India, and was finally arrested at Karachi in possession of a false passport, which had been obtained for him by M. N. Roy, the *alias* under which Narendra Nath Battacharji, the leader of the Indian group in Moscow, is now known.

Abdul Hamid was put on his trial at Peshawar, convicted, and sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment for conspiracy to overthrow the Government of India.

This particular venture of the Soviet to introduce trained seditionist Indians into the country was not successful. But there have been many others, and in numerous cases these emissaries of revolution have been abroad in the land for a long time before finally being run to earth. They have done a lot of damage, and although the Soviet has complained that events have not justified the money expended, that is merely because a complete overthrow of the British rule in India was expected as a result of propaganda. The story of Abdul Hamid shows only some of the methods employed by the Soviet to stir up trouble in the East. Another way is through the buffer country of Afghanistan.

It is not sufficiently widely known that three small Soviet republics have been established on the Russian side of the River Oxus. Two of them, Turkmenistan and Usbegstan, are peopled by Tartar stock; while the third, Tajikstan, is inhabited by people of Persian descent. These small republics constantly preach the principles of self-determination and racial consolidation to those



others of their race who live just across the River Oxus and who are Afghan subjects. It has all along been the object of the Soviet to unite these peoples under the Bolshevik flag. If this movement is ever successful it will mean war in Afghanistan, of which the Indian Government would be forced to take notice, for should the Soviet win the campaign India would be menaced by a victorious and aggressive Bolshevik community on the frontier, with regular Soviet troops reinforcing the present army of the three small republics, and with Soviet aeroplanes within easy bombing distance of Peshawar.

The Soviet first got their footing in Afghanistan by means of peaceful penetration. Russian engineers constructed roads which were badly needed. They also laid down telephone cable, and introduced Russian motor-cars, while Russian banks supplied money and gave ample overdrafts to those merchants who showed enterprise in ordering goods of Russian manufacture. All these things were most useful—even necessary—to a modernized Kabul. Here, unfortunately, was nothing tangible to which the Government of India could take exception officially, though all the while it was only too apparent that with this peaceful penetration went Soviet political propaganda, none the less powerful because it was so insidious.

This is the modern frontier problem which the Indian Government is confronted with day by day. The old frontier problem of a civilized Imperial Russia, the problem of protecting Afghanistan against aggression on the part of its powerful neighbour and thereby threatening the peace of India, after being the nightmare of every commander-in-chief in India for decades past, vanished with the war. The revolution in Russia brought a new problem into the world—something a great deal worse and much more real. The old Russia did, to a very great extent, play the game. Now in its place has grown up an entirely unscrupulous and



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anti-social Soviet, a gigantic mischief-maker who ignores all the recognized decencies of the diplomatic game, and by insidious propaganda is attempting the disruption of the British Empire by striking underhand blows at our possessions overseas.

In certain types of revolutionary Indians ready tools are discovered. To this end emissaries of the Soviet have been smuggled into India across the North-West Frontier, and through the ports by means of forged passports, and placed by their masters in thickly populated areas. Plenty of money is freely supplied to them, and they make it their business—by word of mouth, by the forming of secret societies, and by the circulation of printed pamphlets—to spread a distrust and hatred of British institutions and British individuals wherever possible.

Nor has the Soviet failed to take advantage of the long-standing communal feuds which exist between Hindus and Mohammedans. These make the fire and the Soviet pours on fuel to add to the conflagration of religious fanaticism. The red hand of the Soviet may be seen in many other troubles which are not of a religious nature, but it is not seen openly, and the public would be surprised were it possible to publish a list of the people—many of them highly placed Indians—who are directly or indirectly in the pay of Soviet Russia. And certain renegade Englishmen are not entirely free from suspicion.

The plans of the Soviet have succeeded best of all perhaps in Bengal. The Bengali is naturally a hothead; he is likewise very impulsive, excitable, argumentative and most abominably vocal. He is usually "agin the Government," is suspicious to a degree, and has no initiative, and though he is smart with his tongue and speaks English quite well, if at all, his thoughts and motives remain always entirely Oriental.

The rioting in Bengal in the summer of 1926 was on a scale and of a duration quite unprecedented in the



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previous thirty years. While nominally of a religious origin, evidence was not wanting to show that there was political movement behind these widely extended disturbances. Not the least remarkable part of the business was the increasing boldness shown by the rioters in their invasion of the European quarter of Calcutta, and the occasional attacks made on Europeans at Dum Dum, on the outskirts of the city, in Dacca and elsewhere in Bengal.

The scene of one of the most serious riots was Canning Street. This is the virtual wholesale business centre of Calcutta, for here the warehouses, or *godowns* as they are called, of the principal Indian merchants are to be found. Canning Street is narrow and winding, and almost invariably choked with bullock-carts, motor-cars, buffalo- and hand-carts. Its narrow pavements are cluttered with coolies, beggars and vendors of gaudy beads and toothsome sweetmeats; while the revered cow is very much in evidence, wandering about in joyous liberty, owned by nobody and moved on by none, taking its toll of food from every friendly Hindu it comes across.

It is this self-same cow which is at the root of much of the communal rioting. To the Hindu it is a sacred animal, for the faithful believe that the spirits of their forefathers enter after death into the bodies of cows, and in their new form are entitled to respect and maintenance. Strangely enough this belief does not prevent the Hindu ill-treating such animals when they are used as beasts of burden, but they must not in any circumstances be killed. However maimed or incurably injured, any animal, most especially the cow, must be allowed to die by inches.

The Mohammedans will have none of this; they not only kill cows but eat their flesh. Hence the religious disagreements which so frequently result in rioting and loss of human life.

The pig, on the other hand, is a source of trouble to



the Mohammedan community. To them the pig is a decidedly unclean animal; its very presence in the vicinity of the faithful is an outrage. A favourite means of causing deep offence to the Mohammedans is the throwing of a pig's carcass, by some mischief-making Hindu, into the precincts of a Mohammedan mosque. The offender is sought for, and as the most likely way of discovery and punishment is to suspect everyone of the opposite religious persuasion, every Hindu in the immediate vicinity of the mosque is attacked. This is the signal for a general fight, and hordes of men of both communities come from all parts of the city to join in the holy war. On their way, smaller "scraps" are started, until the whole of the narrow streets become battle-grounds. The police then take a hand, and very often the affair finishes up with the original opposing parties uniting to belabour their mutual enemies, the police, who are looked on as spoil-sports when murder and pillage are the objectives.

It is the age-old feud between these two opposing religions which is only too often responsible for the serious loss of life that results from these riots. Babies are born in the faith, and little children are educated in the belief that the religion most opposed to their own is an evil which, wherever possible and at all costs, must be stamped out. Tolerance is quite unknown.

Ramadan, the fasting season of the Mohammedans, usually is the signal for an outbreak of religious fanaticism, and the Bengali year, which starts just about the time the Moslem fast finishes, brings a recrudescence of disorder. Then comes the first month of the Mohammedan new year, and the contending parties are at it again, the Moslems usually getting the worst of the exchange, for, be it remembered, in all parts of India, save in the Punjab, in Sind, Kashmir, and in the North-West trans-Frontier districts, Hindus outnumber Mohammedans by about five to one.

To those people who know Calcutta it appears almost



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incredible that rioting could have continued there for as many months as was the case in 1926. Calcutta is one of the largest cities in the Empire, and in educational progress stands higher than any other place in India. Moreover, its police force is large and well disciplined, officered by a European Commissioner and several deputy-commissioners, while the mounted and foot sergeants of the force also are Europeans. In addition to these there are Anglo-Indian and Indian assistant commissioners and inspectors, who are in charge of certain districts of the city.

Calcutta is the headquarters of the Bengal Presidency Brigade, and besides these regular troops there are the various units of the Indian Territorial Force. One of these, the Calcutta Scottish, is a crack corps corresponding to the London Scottish, and composed in the main of young European business men, many of whom served in the war.

It was mostly in the purely Indian quarter of the city that there was the greatest loss of life, for here are many narrow culs-de-sac, where unfortunate Indians were dragged by their frenzied religious opponents and done to death, with little or no chance of the crime being prevented, or even traced. It is safe to assume that not one-third of the actual casualties were ever published.

It is only when rioting occurs in main streets that the Indian police can deal at all effectively with the rioters. Street-fighting is always a nasty business, and in the East it is particularly unpleasant, for the rioters arm themselves with all kinds of crude weapons, and altogether act in a blind, irresponsible way, quite unknown in European countries.

The New Market was another scene of rioting. This market is situated just off Chowringhi, the principal shopping centre of the city, the Regent Street of Calcutta. *Sahib* and *mem-sahib*, Indian prince and Indian coolie, must all come here, or send their servants, daily for a supply of fresh provisions. The New Market is also well



known to all visitors to Calcutta, who are never tired of exploring its many attractions. It is a great one-storeyed building, rather like the covered-in market in Birmingham. It contains several hundred shops, and in area covers several acres, including the actual markets for the sale of fruit, meat and vegetables.

Here also sit the money-changers, behind iron bars, and the writers of letters, who for a small fee indite epistles for their illiterate clients.

The mere fact that this huge market remained closed for days at a time during the disturbances showed the extent and seriousness of the rioting, threatening as it did the food supply of the entire city. Despite assurances to the contrary, there can be little doubt that seditious propaganda was at the root of this very prolonged rioting during 1926.

It is only too easy for the adroit seditionist to work on the feelings of Hindu and Mohammedan alike so as to convince both that British rule is accountable for all the domestic differences to which India is, and always will be, heir. The extremists, and those others who are never tired of demanding India for the Indians, find it convenient to ignore the fact that only British rule, backed up by British troops, stands between the two great disputing schools of religious belief, giving each fair play, and acting as a mediating and pacifying influence when the smouldering embers burst into flame at oft-recurring intervals. Remove British rule and British bayonets and the whole of India would be a gigantic battle-field within six months, leaving the country at the mercy of the first Great Power who cared to come along and take by force the country which Indians so foolishly threw away. The Indian army without British officers would be perfectly useless. There is no Indian navy: if ever there is one, it will depend for many years on British personnel, as far as most of the commissioned ranks are concerned, for its usefulness.



The demand that Indians shall be allowed completely to govern—or misgovern—India while the British Government provides an army and a navy to protect them against internal disorders and foreign aggression is a ridiculous proposition. Yet when you pin an Indian extremist politician down to bedrock this is the proposal he places before you. He wishes to call the tune while the British people pay the piper.

Deeper down in the underworld of Indian life lurks the Indian terrorist, and although Bengal has been free for a considerable time from any serious terrorist outrage this must be attributed to the work of the Criminal Investigation Department, specially armed with additional powers by the passing of the Bengal Ordinance and other emergency laws. These laws are to remain in force for several years yet, and against them the extremist politicians and Press never cease to fulminate. Certainly there is no relaxation of activity on the part of the revolutionary party. Government reports are available which give full details of the recent tracking and arrest of well-known terrorists, the discovery of bomb manufactories, the frustration of a series of clever, carefully planned conspiracies to import arms, and the breaking up of numerous gangs of dacoits, the composition of which suggests that the driving power behind many of the sensational armed robberies was political rather than economic. A feature of the lawless activity which increasingly is demanding attention is the increase in spurious coining and the forging of currency notes. There is reason to believe that this is a new enterprise of the terrorists, who are now experiencing an increasing difficulty in carrying out the old-style armed raids for the purpose of providing funds.

It is only at such times of serious communal rioting that Indian politicians and business men show any love for the police. It then becomes a purely personal matter, for their homes, shops, warehouses, and even



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their lives, are in peril. They suffer loss of trade, become thoroughly scared, and then squeal loudly for protection. A few months later these same men will be found agitating for a reduction in the numbers, or the pay, of the police force. Likewise those who are legislators will be found going into the Lobby against any increase in the police estimates, which Government may propose as a practical means of insuring adequate protection to life and property.

There is not the slightest doubt that the Indian police are underpaid and overworked. They are inadequate in numbers, and in many places are housed disgracefully. Unlike the British "bobby," the Indian policeman meets with little assistance from the general public. He is looked upon with distrust by his fellow-countrymen, and Europeans refuse to take him seriously. In bygone years there was always a plentiful stiffening of European sergeants in the police, but these have been gradually whittled down between the two millstones of Indianization and economy, until now the number of European sergeants in the force is very small indeed. After the last riots a number of fresh men were drafted into the police from the troops to act as sergeants, but whether they will be retained permanently remains to be seen. The police afford an example of a Service where rapid Indianization is against the best interests of the people themselves.

There is another side to this demand for the Services to be filled entirely by Indians. The type of education which makes semi-efficient clerks by the thousand annually, to the almost complete exclusion of technical training, lies at the very root of the matter.

The large Indian cities have their universities, which turn out thousands of men entitled to place the magic letters M.A. after their names. Years of study and the sacrifices of parents and friends have made possible the taking of an Arts degree. The standard is certainly not as high as that required for a London matriculation,



and the commercial value of the graduate is very small indeed, for the majority of these men can command nothing better than a small clerkship at Rs30 to Rs60 a month—little more than the wages of a house-servant. The dignity of his position is comforting, but his prospects financially are distinctly poor; advancement is slow, and jobs are by no means plentiful.

If the graduate is able to get into the service of Government he is considered lucky, however lowly his position may be at first, for with Government clerkships there is security of tenure, the pay is certain, and at retirement a small pension may be had as a right. It is no wonder that in these days of uncertainty and unemployment such jobs are very keenly sought after. Many graduates take up the law and become what are called "Pleaders." Their status is something akin to that of a solicitor, for they may appear before magistrates for the defence or prosecution in minor cases. These "pleaders" will take a case for almost any fee—sometimes as low as eight annas; they collect debts, buy and sell shares, and in fact turn their hand to any sort of clerical free-lance work.

These men of the educated, or *badhralogue*, class are much to be pitied; class and caste prejudice is all against them taking up manual work of any kind, though India is crying out for small industries: if only educated lads would show enterprise and start them!

Some of the more advanced leaders of Indian thought realize this state of things and have the desire to do something helpful, but they appear to find it very difficult of accomplishment. Mr Bepin Chandra Pal, the editor of the *Bengalee*, expressed himself on this point in the course of a debate on unemployment at a meeting of the Legislative Assembly, of which he is a member.

"My son," Mr Pal said, "is learning to be an electrical engineer, but I don't like him having to use a hammer; we none of us like our boys doing manual



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work. Never, then, shall we overcome this unemployment unless we change our mental attitude and the whole social system."

In the course of this debate other speakers laid all the blame for unemployment at the door of British rule, asserting that until the British came to India unemployment was unknown.

The Government reply was made by the Member for Industry, Sir Bhupendranath Mitra—himself a Bengali. He admitted that unemployment had probably increased during British rule in India, but he asked :

"Do you wish to return to the earlier conditions, when anarchy averted unemployment by thinning the population ?"

As matters stand to-day the cry all the time is for more jobs into which the educated Indian may go. Complete Indianization of all the Services would certainly supply a number of jobs, but it is absurd to imagine that the thousands of graduates which are turned out annually from the Indian universities could be absorbed year by year in this way. Indianization would not have the slightest effect on the birth-rate, neither could it produce a nation of inventive geniuses. The Indian mind is inherently imitative; I have yet to hear of a single invention which had its inception in India and was the child of an Indian's brain. India has produced a poet and a thinker in Sir Rabindranath Tagore; a plant physiologist in Sir Jagadis Chandra Bose, who has devoted his life and money to proving that plants feel—are in fact "anchored animals"; and an eminent lawyer in Lord Sinha. These three names are known throughout the civilized world. And so is Mr Gandhi's—for less enviable reasons. There I must stop, for what other Indian's name is known to any extent beyond the limits of his own country?

Until India throws off her absurd prejudice to honest manual work, and thinks less about her ancient civilization and more about adapting herself to the needs of



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the twentieth century, she will still put a fictitious value on academic degrees which lead to mere quill-driving, and Indian unemployment will grow greater every year.

Not all the Indianization which the most extreme of Indian Nationalists could desire would have the smallest influence on that malady of caste and class prejudice which is to-day eating into the vitals of the country. So long as this fetish endures, India will fail to take her wished-for place among the worth-while nations of the world.

All this leads naturally to the question of the efforts of the various sections of the Christian Church which have for so long been striving to convert India to a belief in Jesus Christ. I have no intention of dogmatizing on this subject, but will give a few facts and figures, and leave the matter to be thought out by you for yourselves.

There are in India to-day some 5,000,000 professing Christians, and of these nearly 2,000,000 are Roman Catholics.

On the other hand there are Hindus, with Buddhists, Jains and Parsees. These form 75 per cent.—a clear majority—of the total population. Mohammedans total 21 per cent. of the population, while those who are technically known as heathen (animists—those who believe in a human apparitional soul, having the form and appearance of the body, existing after death as semi-human) still number 10,300,000.

Roughly speaking, out of the average assembly of 100 Indians, 69 are Hindus, 22 are Mohammedans, 8 are Buddhists and only 1 Christian.

It is estimated that in the last ten years the Christian Church in India has increased to the extent of 22 per cent.—that about 100,000 converts have been added to the Church annually.

As the acceptance of Christianity means the social ostracism of the convert by his friends and relations, if he be a man of caste, it is not surprising that converts



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to Christianity come largely from those 60,000,000 Indians who are known as "untouchables"—the most despised and degraded among the peoples of India.

Many educated and thinking Indians admire and revere the Christ of the New Testament while having no liking for Christianity as portrayed in the churches and in the lives of the professing Christians around them. India is not alone in thinking thus; but where the Indian makes a grave mistake is in thinking that because the inhabitants of Europe belong to what are universally called Christian countries it necessarily follows that all Europeans are professing Christians. The travelled Indian who knows Europe to a certain extent is better informed, but the average Indian has to get his ideas of Christianity from the Europeans and Indian Christians he sees in India itself. It is not remarkable if his conclusions are unfavourable, for there is nothing to be gained by burking the plain fact that the Christian Church does not fill the same place in the lives of Europeans in India which it did when they were in their own country.

Several reasons are responsible for this state of things. (1) If laziness and apathy count for slackness in church-going at home, they count even more in the tropics. (2) The social and racial difficulties which are attendant on a congregation of mixed colour. (3) The very real difficulty there is in admitting that all men are equal in the sight of God, and the still greater difficulty of carrying this belief, if accepted, to its logical conclusion.

Again, the European finds a decent religious people practising the religion of their forefathers unashamed. Why should he upset them in their beliefs? The very driver of your humble *ghari* halts his horse at sunset and, getting down from his perch, falls on his face towards the setting sun and offers prayers to the Almighty. And the average European is too lazy even to order his motor-car to drive him to his church once on Sundays. Who shall say that the glory of an Eastern



sunset is less likely to inspire devotion than the stained-glass windows of a cathedral?

It must also be admitted that the example shown to those many Indians who travel in America and in Europe militates very greatly against their acceptance of a religion which they see in practice largely ignores or misinterprets the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Indians are courteous to missionaries who practise what they preach and are not afraid of a free discussion of the fundamentals with the more educated amongst their neighbours. Medical missionaries are best understood; the Indian is very grateful for practical Christianity of this kind. What he particularly dislikes is a notion, not altogether unfounded, that an acceptance of Christianity necessitates an acceptance of Western civilization and industrialism.

Many Indians who have studied the Bible in the light of modern happenings have stated their belief that Mr Gandhi is the nearest approach to the personality of Christ that has yet appeared on earth; some even go so far as to profess a belief that Mr Gandhi is divine, and indeed the Christ of the Second Coming. By this method of reasoning these Indians have persuaded themselves that the cause of Swaraj and Christ's will are one. There is a fear that certain American missionaries have pandered to this idea in an endeavour to gain converts to their churches. If this is so, only dire trouble can result all round.

Political Christianity is unwise in Europe; it is sheer madness in the Orient.



CHAPTER XI

Racing and Sport generally—The Calcutta Sweep—Boxing—
Common Diseases—How to keep fit—Meat and Drink—
Death and Burial

RACING, so often called the sport of kings, is everybody's sport in India. It can be as cheap or as costly as you desire, for the whole community, from the Governor down to the humblest coolie, finds a place at almost any of the numerous race meetings held in various parts of the country throughout most months of the year. In few other countries can racing be enjoyed in such comfort, and nowhere in India can you race under more pleasant conditions than in Calcutta.

From the middle of November until the end of March races are held at the headquarters of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, and during the Christmas holidays racing takes place on three consecutive weekdays. The race-course is situated on the *maidan*, within easy reach of all parts of the city ; it is not necessary for anyone to take a train journey to get to the races, as so many people must do in Bombay.

For an hour prior to the time of the first race all roads leading to the course are crowded with traffic. It is rather like Derby Day at Epsom, though of course on a much smaller scale. Nevertheless, for a short space of time the roads are just as crowded, and skilful driving is necessary to get through without a mishap. Private cars are very numerous, and taxis rush by at breakneck speed, taking any and every sort of risk in order to get to the course in the shortest possible space of time, deposit their passengers and chase back citywards for more fares. Speed-limits are for the time being totally ignored, and accidents are of frequent occurrence. Mixed up with the crowd of motor-cars are horse-drawn *gharis*



of varying ages, which have been pressed into service though long since superannuated. These ancient vehicles proceed as fast as the half-starved quadruped between the shafts can be induced to travel, encouraged by the howls of its driver, and tortured by the oft-applied whip, without which the Indian driver seems totally unable to do his job. Young Indians chase along on bicycles, their white, loosely draped *dhotis* floating behind them in the artificial breeze, while countless hundreds make the journey on foot. The latter part of the journey takes you round most of the outside of the race-course itself, which, apart from a treble white rail, is open to the road. Thus it is possible for anyone to see the racing without charge, and people in motor-cars and many pedestrians spend race afternoons thus, watching the start of each race and saving money by keeping clear of the fascination of the betting ring. But the average resident of Calcutta is not content with this mild form of amusement; he wants to be in the thick of the fun, cost what it may.

There are three grand stands in the first enclosure, all built of solid masonry, three storeys high, complete with electric lifts and fans. They are of great dimensions, and seat comfortably a very large proportion of those who pay for admission. There is a tier of boxes on each stand which may be reserved for the whole racing season, and a bar on the ground floor and a tea-room on the first floor minister to the creature comforts of thirsty race-goers. All these stands have an uninterrupted view of the whole race-course, and one—the stand reserved exclusively for members of the R.C.T.C.—is immediately opposite the winning-post. Members have a separate entrance and a special parking place for their cars, as well as their own tea-room and refreshment-room adjacent to the paddock. Another stand is reserved for stand members of the R.C.T.C. and such of the general public who have paid for a paddock ticket in addition to the usual price of admission to the first enclosure.

There is a totalizator for this enclosure, where tickets



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to the value of Rs10 or Rs100 may be taken on horses in each race—both for win and place. This machine is patronized usually by the small punter, while the ring of about a dozen licensed bookmakers, which is situated close by, conducts business with the more venturesome and wealthy of the racing public.

This first enclosure is patronized by Europeans and the better-class Indians and Anglo-Indians. There are many ladies among the crowd which throngs the paddock and stands ; on Cup Days the scene is a really brilliant one, with ladies in their daintiest dresses and their escorts in spotless white or cream, while the stewards of the club flit here and there attired in grey morning coats and grey top-hats. H.E. the Governor is frequently an attendant at the races in an unofficial capacity, while on certain special occasions he attends in state, driving down the course in a carriage with postillon and outriders. A brilliant spectacle, in quite the best Ascot style.

The second enclosure also has a large permanent stand and a totalizator, this time a Rs5 one for both win and place tickets, but no bookmakers. Soldiers in uniform are admitted free to this enclosure, and it is patronized also by Anglo-Indians and Indians of the middle class. The third enclosure is purely an Indian one, and the accommodation is usually taxed to its uttermost, for the price of admission is very low.

The race-track circles the great green *maidan*, the centre portion of which is free ground to all who care to come, and great crowds of poor Indians take advantage of the free entertainment provided, standing in masses as close to the rails as the mounted police who are on duty will allow. Behind them are others of the general public, some on foot and some on horseback, who run from one vantage-point to another as the races proceed. But the greatest crowd remains near the winning-post, to join in the vocal efforts of the people standing opposite in sheltered seclusion and cheering on their particular fancy to victory.



The scene inside the first enclosure during the half-hour which elapses between two races is one of extreme animation. All sorts of people are lining up at the windows of the totalizator, backing their own or somebody else's fancy. Little groups of twos and threes stand about absorbing one another's wisdom in low tones. A smartly dressed woman is seen chasing the owner of a horse entered in the next race; dignity is thrown to the winds in an endeavour to find out the likely winner. Back she comes, flushed but triumphant, and goes swiftly to a window of the "tote." Following her are some others, whose sharp eyes have been observing her movements; they follow her lead and take win tickets on the fancied horse, only to find the lady going to yet another window and backing yet another horse—again for a win. Verily the ways of women are beyond understanding, and the watchers depart crestfallen to try other means of procuring information.

There are a few Indian women sitting below the trees on garden-seats. They are gaily dressed and bejewelled, good-looking withal and unveiled; neither are they unknown to some of the racing fraternity. At the last minute they make their bets, one of their number taking tickets for them all. In each race they take tickets on a single horse, straight out for a win, and it is remarkable how often you will see them collecting at the pay-out windows of the "tote" after a race. Luck? Maybe; but tempered by useful information from the right source, supplied at the right moment, and taken full advantage of in an unobtrusive way.

Just before the "tote" closes a frantic rush takes place. It is chiefly those people who must have a bet on some horse in each race and who, having delayed till the last moment, rush blindly into the queue which is backing the favourite and take a ticket "each way," just for luck. Maybe they get to the head of the queue just as the closing bell rings, and the window is slammed in their faces. And as likely as not they are really the



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lucky ones; favourites do not always win, even in Calcutta.

The scene from the top floor of the grand stand is a truly wonderful spectacle. The race-track stretches a huge ellipse, in the centre of which is greensward almost as far as the eye can see, and above and beyond tower the stately proportions of the Victoria Memorial—a wonder in white marble—while close by is the slender spire of the Cathedral, a bit of old Calcutta architecture which for grace and beauty has not its equal in the city. Great trees surround the boundaries of the race-course, their greenness making a pleasing background to the sea of humanity which, in garments of varied hue, pass and repass before this natural curtain. Away to the right great black-and-white crowds blot out the grass which lies before the second and third enclosures. What a noise they make! But it is nothing to the pandemonium which is let loose as the tapes are released, and through your glasses you see “the field” start from the six-furlong post. The noise increases as the horses approach. The first enclosure now throws away its assumed air of calm, women shriek and faint, while strong men mop their brows and swear as the favourite is pipped at the post and a rank outsider wins. Violent argument is hushed into low groans as the numbers go up; then almost everyone leaves his seat and treks earthwards. By the time the ground is reached the jockeys have weighed in, the “All right” cone has been hoisted, and the bell which signals the “tote” to open for the next race is loudly ringing. The blind which hides the figures of the race just run flies up, and an excited crowd breathes a deep “Oh!” as the very nourishing dividend to be paid out on the winner is disclosed. A small proportion of the crowd turns eagerly towards the paying-out windows; the vast majority turn again, like Dick Whittington, in search of a fortune. A glimpse at the lucky ones is almost irresistible. Who knows, they may be worth while following in other races! One dirty old Indian is



seen stuffing great wads of currency notes into the folds of his capacious *dhoti*. He had a number of win tickets, and has collected enough money to keep himself and family for the next six months. Of course he should go home: it is very improbable he will do so, for that is the curse of racing; the fever gets into your blood and you simply can't stop. If you win you want more, while if you lose you keep on backing, as long as you have any funds left, in the hope that a luck which has forsaken you may speedily return. For all that, racing is a great game, and if you are keen on it there are few better places in which to win or lose money than India during the racing season.

Whether you ever race in Calcutta or not there is always the glorious possibility of winning a small fortune by taking a lucky ticket in the Calcutta Sweepstake on the Derby. Nowhere else in the world is there any sweep on a race which approaches in money value this one.

It was originally the Bengal Club Sweep, but in the early eighties it was taken over by the Calcutta Turf Club, as it was then called (its patent of Royalty only having been granted when the King went to India for the Coronation Durbar, in 1911-1912), and ever since then the sweep has remained under the direction and supervision of the richest racing club in the world. At one time the Melbourne Club Sweep, which was, I think, conducted under the ægis of the Victorian Racing Club, was more valuable, but in recent years Calcutta has left all other sweeps behind.

The Calcutta Sweep is famous throughout the world, and there is now no country in which some people have not a share, which, should luck favour them, may mean a good income assured for the rest of their lives. The prizes are very substantial, and have been for many years, though of course their total value depends on the number of tickets taken in the sweep. The prizes in the 1926 draw were as follows:—



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First prize, £120,000 ; second prize, £60,000 ; third prize, £30,000.

In addition, all those who drew horses were sure of about £2000. Any of these prizes is a splendid return for an investment of Rs10—approximately 15s.

The way in which the draw is carried out is extremely simple. In one large glass barrel are placed all the tickets taken in the sweep, and at the time of its closing this barrel is padlocked and sealed in the presence of the stewards of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club, who take charge of the key. In another similar barrel are placed the names of every horse which has been entered in the Derby. These barrels are revolved by means of cranks, and before each number and each horse is drawn the cranks are turned, so that all the tickets and all the horses' names are well mixed. As each ticket and each horse is drawn the number and the name of the horse, or the blank, is noted by the tellers and entered by the accountants in the club's registers.

Although tickets in the Calcutta Sweep are supplied only to members of the R.C.T.C., there is no restriction on the number which may be purchased by any individual member, nor on their distribution. Hence every member is bombarded with requests for tickets, and for months in advance these tickets are being sent to friends in all parts of the world.

The word "tickets" is rather misleading, for of late years the sending of actual tickets has been discontinued. What the purchaser now receives in exchange for his money is a number only. The member who sells this "ticket" notes the name of the purchaser against the number sold, which represents the ticket drawn for in the Sweep. And in case of good fortune the holder of a particular number is communicated with in just the same way as if he held the old-time printed ticket.

It is ironical that only in a few instances has the first prize in the Calcutta Sweep gone to an actual member of the club. Some unknown individual living in a far-off



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country is nearly always the lucky winner, and for a few days is famous throughout the world. He or she is certain to know, almost the hour of the draw, of his good fortune in drawing a favourite, and wealthy syndicates are sure to cable offers for either the whole or half the ticket.

The club member who supplies a ticket which wins a prize gets no share of it by the rules of the game, though an unwritten law operates and admits of his receiving a small percentage of the prize-money.

Under the club rules the money can be paid out only to the actual registered owner of the ticket, and he must of course be a member. He in turn passes on the prize-money to the individual to whom he sold the actual ticket concerned. No prize-winner grudges a small percentage on the collection and forwarding of the large stake which has been won for him through the courtesy of a friend.

Almost everybody plays tennis in India. There are hard courts and grass courts, and some of the world's best players learned the rudiments of the game out there—notably Shimudzu, whom a friend of mine in a next-door chummery used to take on at singles on a hard court before breakfast every morning.

Indians take very kindly to English games of all kinds, more especially football. "Soccer" is the favourite beyond question, and there are some splendid Indian teams which can hold their own with any European team in the country. They play in bare feet, which on hard ground is all in their favour; but when the rains come the players in boots have the advantage. It is terribly hard work for the European players running against barefooted opponents on the hard, sun-baked soil of India. Soles become shiny and studs cease to function, becoming as polished as a mirror. I never witnessed these mixed matches without thinking that the practice of allowing one side to play in bare feet should never have been



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allowed when the game was first introduced into India. Football was invented to be played a certain way, and learners should learn the whole game—boots and all. Indians have learned also the noble art of self-defence, but they do not box with bare hands !

It is a wonderful sight to see a first-class match between the crack Bengali team, Mohan Bagan, and a military team. A crowd of quite ten thousand turns out on these occasions and the Indian spectators form the majority. The Indian team is sporting enough, but I cannot say as much for their supporters, who delight in barracking ; and while they never lose an opportunity of cheering wildly any good play by their fellow-countrymen, they are silent as the grave when the Europeans score in any way. It is hard not to believe that racial feeling enters even into games in India, for I have witnessed ugly scenes at football matches there, and more than once a free fight has ensued, and the police have been called in to suppress racial animosity. Still, the scenes at many a football match in England nowadays are none too edifying, so I will not pursue the matter further.

" Rugger " is played mostly by Europeans, and is not so popular as at home ; but the Indians have taken kindly to cricket, and there are many clubs in India which play matches throughout the season, and compete for pride of place with great enthusiasm.

Boxing tournaments never fail to draw great crowds in both Bombay and Calcutta. These are usually staged at a local theatre, and the place is packed from roof to floor. A proper ring is erected on the stage and ring seats are sold from a plan. It says much for the stamina and condition of the contestants in these bouts that they are able to box for anything up to sixteen rounds in the heat of an Indian summer. I recall one of these boxing exhibitions which gave the spectators and contestants alike an unexpected thrill.

A burly middle-weight European was billed to box another of his fellow-countrymen. At the last minute



his opponent failed to turn up, and a volunteer was called for to take his place. Much to our surprise a frail-looking young Indian, going rather prematurely bald, who was sitting clad in evening dress in the ring seats, offered to be the victim. Someone lent him the necessary outfit, and in a few minutes he was in the ring. A sympathetic cheer and some quiet smiles greeted his appearance, and as the men squared up it looked little short of murder to let them fight. In fact cries of "Shame!" were raised in several quarters of the house, but the referee took no notice and allowed the fight to start. In the first round it was apparent that the big fellow was not to have it all his own way, for the young Indian ducked, dodged, and danced about the ring in an amazing manner. The big fellow could not hit him at all, and began to get annoyed. The gong sounded, with no casualties on either side.

The audience was now all attention, and as the men came from their corners for the second round there were encouraging shouts for the young Indian. He straightway changed his tactics and landed blow after blow in quite a professional manner. The European now looked worried and the crowd cheered wildly, but they went almost mad with excitement when the Indian swung a beautiful hook to the point and the big fellow dropped like a stone. There he lay motionless, long after he was counted out, and was eventually helped to his corner by his seconds. He seemed stunned, and well he might be, for I never saw a better blow delivered. The young Indian then jumped across the ring and took the apparently unconscious man by his two ears and tugged them vigorously until the man quickly came to, and getting up shook hands rather sheepishly, and walked out of the ring looking as if he had just awakened from a bad dream.

Well he might! For the young Indian turned out to be a man named Roy, who had been coached by Jimmy Wilde so successfully that he had taken his half-blue



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for boxing at Cambridge. He was a gazetted officer on one of the railways, and only an interested spectator of the show until chance once again gave him the opportunity of a little practice at his favourite sport. Fellows talked of nothing else for days afterwards.

The problem of disease is apt to be a nightmare to your stay-at-home friends and relations, also to yourself until you actually reach the tropics, when you will not worry half as much about it. The cholera belt presented you by a loving maiden aunt should be packed at the bottom of your deepest trunk, and left there, to be released only under direct orders from a competent medical man.

Mosquitoes, and other flying pests of various kinds, will at first be your principal source of annoyance; new blood is fresh and tempting food indeed to insects who bite to live, while those of us who are old stagers have become tough, tasteless, and generally uninteresting. Mosquito bites are painful and irritating, but all mosquitoes are not dangerous to health. Only a certain type, the anopheles mosquito, transmits to man the microbe of malaria. Still, as you cannot be certain of identifying each mosquito before he has his bite, it is a wise precaution to protect yourself against any and every mosquito.

Mosquitoes breed in stagnant water, in dusty, dark corners, in old discarded tins, and in refuse of all kinds. Thick oil should be poured on stagnant water, all dark corners should be cleaned out regularly and sprayed with disinfectant, old tins should be incinerated and then buried, while all refuse should be burnt daily, and the rooms of your dwelling sprayed twice every day with "Flit," or some similar insecticide. These sensible precautions will keep a house practically free of insects and bugs of all kinds, while stray flying visitors will be driven away by the breeze from your fans. A small crucible filled with burning incense and placed beneath



the centre of your dining-table during meal-times will drive away such of the pests as are hiding from the breeze and waiting their chance to bite.

Once bitten, the most important and useful advice is to check the almost irresistible desire to scratch, for nothing is more mischievous than this form of injected poison when it is thoroughly rubbed in. It is useful to paint the affected parts with iodine or ether of iodine. Ammonia and also calamine lotion are alike soothing to bitten and swollen flesh, and the application of a handkerchief soaked in ice-water allays irritation to a great extent.

Mosquitoes carry also the germs of dengue fever, which, if not as serious or permanent as malaria, is a very unpleasant fever while it lasts, and will keep the patient weak and ill for a fortnight. Burning and aching eyeballs, pain at the back of the head, aching bones and skin eruption, combined with a very high temperature, are the usual symptoms, and the after-effects of dengue are extreme weakness and an inclination to heart trouble.

What is known as "three-day fever" is comparatively common at more or less regular intervals, and attacks quite early the newcomer to India. There is nothing alarming about this complaint, which involves a temperature, and a headache on and off for a few days. Most people carry on as usual and take aspirin now and then, also a good purgative, which quickly restores them to normality.

The glare of an unaccustomed hot sun may give the new arrival a headache and a rise in his temperature. Some people find that dark glasses are useful, especially if their eyes are weak, though personally I found them induce the very headaches they were designed to prevent. A really efficient *topi*, light and airy, with a brim protruding sufficiently far forward and backward to cast a good shade, seems to me to give all that is necessary in the way of protection for both eyes and head. Wear



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this *topi* when out of doors, no matter whether you are motoring in a closed car or standing directly in the sun, from early morning until an hour before sunset, and you can with safety brave the fiercest sun. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security because on some days the sun appears veiled by clouds, and leave off your *topi* in consequence. The sun can get you just the same, and maybe will—before you can say “knife.” Never give the sun the benefit of the doubt; when in doubt wear your *topi*.

Always sleep beneath a mosquito net if you wish to keep fit when living in the plains of India. And if you are in a district where sand-flies flourish it will have to be a sand-fly net, a material with a much finer mesh, for sand-flies can pass two or three abreast through the holes in a mosquito net.

It is important that your mosquito net should not be torn, and that your boy lets it down before sunset and tucks it well beneath the mattress. If these precautions are neglected your net ceases to be a protection, and becomes instead a trap for mosquitoes and other winged insects; a night spent therein will mean sleepless torment for the human occupant and happy hunting for the imprisoned insects.

You will not find it at all stuffy sleeping beneath a net if it is of ample proportions, and raised sufficiently high above your head; there must be enough room for you to kneel up in bed, and an efficient ceiling fan should be kept going steadily throughout the night, above the net. If you are apt to feel chilly one sheet will be sufficient to keep you comfortable, but I found in practice that by keeping a top sheet handy I soon learned to slip beneath it at the first sign of chilliness, doing so quite unconsciously in my sleep.

Do not be afraid of using a fan on all occasions; the cost is little in comparison with the comfort and good health the proper use of a fan brings. Every respectable house, bungalow or flat has plenty of fans, and if



electricity is not available it is quite easy to fix up some old-fashioned hand-punkahs, and inexpensive to hire coolies to pull them. You cannot expect to keep fit if you sit about in perspiration by day and bathe in it by night. Plenty of efficient fans are not luxuries, but absolute necessities in the East; without them life would be well-nigh unbearable to the average European. On the Indian, and even Anglo-Indian, the climate has not the same effect. Thus the Bengali can go about bareheaded in the fiercest sun all day, with nothing but his thick, oily, black hair to protect him, and suffer no ill effects. Nor do mosquitoes or sand-flies seem to trouble him, and while he is glad enough of a fan in your office, he would not trouble to have one in his house.

Prickly-heat is one of the minor ailments from which some Europeans suffer quite a lot. It is really caused by excessive perspiration, and appears as a red rash on various parts of the body, especially where there is much chafing from clothing. People who enjoy robust health are more subject to this irritating temporary affliction than are less healthy individuals. Some men become literally covered with prickly-heat, and many children suffer a great deal in this way. There are many so-called "cures," and for the benefit of those who have tried them all unsuccessfully I will give a recipe which I have never yet known to fail. It is in powder form, and should be applied freely to the affected parts several times a day.

2 oz. boracic acid
2 oz. zinc powder
4 oz. starch powder
30 drops carbolic acid

A few general hints may here be useful on keeping cool in the tropics. First there is the question of bathing—a delightful theme, for, as Aliph Cheem so truly says in his *Lays of Ind* :

"There's nothing in Ind so sweet as a plunge
In a jolly big bath with a jolly big sponge."



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However, before you have your morning plunge make it a rule to take at least five minutes' really violent exercise. It may seem strange, but it is none the less a fact that copious perspiration induced early in the morning will do much to prevent an exhausted feeling later on, caused by excessive perspiration during the rest of the day. On your return home from office in the evening it is well to take another bath, and, after a brisk rub down, have a complete change of clothing. It is advisable to wear shoes which are sufficiently large to allow for feet swelling, and to avoid ultra-thin socks with cotton bases. Soft wool will protect the feet and act both as an absorbent and cushion; a cotton fabric induces heat, becomes quickly harsh, and causes soreness. Likewise it is unwise to wear either too thick or too thin soled shoes. The former are heavy and clumsy for everyday use, and the latter allow the hot pavements to burn through to your feet.

Drink lots of water, so that the siphoning process may go on in the body; the moisture exuded demands constant replenishment, and failure to provide for this may result in heat-collapse.

It is well to cut out all alcoholic drinks, certainly spirits, until the sun goes down, when a whisky-and-soda will be found an excellent pick-me-up; and you will likely find some cheery souls who will encourage you to repeat the dose—with good effects all round.

It is customary in India to eat lots of fresh fruit. It is much cheaper than at home, though there is not such a plentiful variety. Avoid too many starchy foods, which of course are both heating and fattening; and talking about fattening foods makes me recall that if you wish to keep slim it is well to restrict your consumption of soda-water and other gassy beverages. The men who are afraid of getting really fat usually take ice-water with their whisky in preference to soda.

Tight clothing is fatal to comfort and health in the tropics. Let your collars be on the large size, and the



neckbands of your shirts should be a good half-inch larger still. The question of soft or starched collars is one for every man to decide for himself. You will find both much favoured—a fifty-fifty proposition—though personally I find that an ordinary starched collar is preferable on those many occasions when it is necessary to wear a coat. It keeps the coat collar from chafing the back of your neck, and if properly laundered will retain its stiffness for more hours than some prejudiced fellows would have you believe. Of course there is nothing to equal the comfort of a tennis shirt and shorts, but you cannot go to office thus clad in the cities of India. Real comfort is reserved for the golf links and Sunday mornings.

A frequent complete change of clothes is helpful in an endeavour to keep cool. Usually the people who keep most comfortable are those who keep their minds occupied in more useful and profitable directions than in a perpetual discussion about the heat. Whatever year you may chance to visit any particular heat spot in India there will always be someone or other who will declare that the place is experiencing the hottest weather ever recorded within living memory. It always was: and so it will be the next time you chance to roll up at that period of the year.

Finally, if any crank tells you in India to do without fans, or iced water, or in fact any of those other pleasurable things which make life worth living in the tropics, just tell him to go to blazes—and not slam the door as he goes out.

The problem of what to eat and what to drink in the tropics is largely one of common sense. It stands to reason that in a part of the world where the ideas of the inhabitants in matters of sanitation are decidedly primitive it is better to boil all drinking water, filter it afterwards, and place it in bottles on the ice to cool. For the same reason never put ice into drinks; put your



sodas on the ice after first cooling them in a bucket of water. Apart from the health question drinks taste so much better thus.

Keep all food in fly-proof safes and cupboards ; and of course boil all milk, and protect milk jugs and bottles with portions of mosquito net weighted down by beads at the edges. Never eat anything to which flies have had access, and avoid cut fruit left over after a meal. It quickly becomes overripe or fly-blown, either of which conditions is dangerous to health. It is advisable to stroll occasionally round your servants' quarters, and to look in at the kitchen on your way. Although Indians are very clean people in their persons, and bathe several times a day, they are not nearly so particular about your food as they are about their own, and will leave it lying about in all kinds of exposed places until they see you mean business. But do not go poking about their quarters when they are having their meals. Your servants are entitled to privacy at such times ; moreover, for reasons of caste, your shadow falling across their food will mean that it has to be thrown away. These religious prejudices, inexplicable as they may be to the Westerner, are very real to the Easterner, and must be respected by the European. It has always been the policy of British rule in India to protect the various religions practised by the inhabitants of the country, without favouritism towards any particular belief, and Europeans are expected to show the same respect and tolerance towards other religions as they wish to see shown to their own.

Many of your preconceived notions must be abandoned on coming to India. For one thing the idea that because a man has a dark skin he is necessarily dirty must go by the board once and for all. I have heard people in England talk in this way who probably bathed only once a week—possibly even less frequently. And once at a seaside resort I saw a group of trippers glancing contemptuously at a smartly dressed Indian who passed by. These people were ignorant enough to refer to the



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stranger as a "dirty nigger," while as a matter of fact the object of their remark changed his linen daily, and bathed night and morning as a matter of course. The trippers were down from London for a day's holiday and a dip in the sea—probably their only total immersion for fully twelve months.

White is worn as a sign of mourning in India instead of the black to which we are accustomed in Europe. Death usually comes swiftly in the East and subsequent burial is never delayed for more than twenty-four hours. Reasons of hygiene make a speedy interment absolutely necessary. You soon get accustomed to this state of things, and it is literally possible to dine with a man one night and attend his funeral the following afternoon. I had a personal experience of this kind when acting as Honorary General Secretary to the Calcutta Amateur Theatrical Society. One of the company, a young European girl member of the chorus, played as usual one night performance, and died soon after she got home, being taken ill quite suddenly. The following afternoon a number of us attended her funeral at 5 P.M., and went on afterwards to give the usual evening performance, as it was the family's wish that nothing should be allowed to break the run of what was a most successful week's run at the theatre, given in aid of local charities.

Surely death is better thus : a long, lingering illness is a trying affair for everybody concerned. It is better to pass swiftly away when the time for passing comes.

With an Indian his manner of burial depends entirely on his religion. The friends of an Indian Christian conform to the European custom common throughout India and bury their dead in a cemetery. Hindus take their dead to a burning *ghat* on a river bank, and the nearest relative of the deceased personally places the body on the funeral pyre. Buddhists also decree burning as a funeral ceremonial, and when a Buddhist priest dies his obsequies are attended by a vast concourse of people. Mohammedans inter their dead in the ground, but the



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Parsee has for his last resting-place a ledge in a stone amphitheatre which is completely surrounded by high walls, but open to the sky. Visitors to Bombay can drive past one of these, known as the Towers of Silence, but may not enter. The dead bodies are placed exposed on ledges to await attention by great vultures and other birds of prey which hang around in large numbers, and as the mourners take their leave these birds swoop down and quickly set to work. Soon nothing remains but a small pile of bones, left to bleach in the blazing sun. To our European ways of thinking this seems an inglorious end, a crude and even ghastly procedure. But the ways of the East are inscrutable, no less in death than in life.

The Indian view regarding the treatment of dumb animals is another instance of the great divergence of opinion between East and West. This question needs a chapter all to itself.



CHAPTER XII

Treatment of Dumb Animals—The Indian Attitude—Work of the Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty—*Phooka* and the Pure Milk Problem—Note on the Working of the New Act

A BOOK in itself could be written on the subject of dumb animals in India, but a chapter must suffice.

There are more cattle in India than in any other country in the world—no less than 150,000,000 all told, most of them being used for draught purposes, though 56,000,000 goats are reared chiefly for their flesh and milk. So much for figures.

Cruelty to animals is rampant in all parts of India, for there animals are looked upon in quite a different way to what we are accustomed in England. The Indian does not keep "pets," and cannot understand the European view at all. He keeps merely animals which are useful in a commercial sense, and he keeps them as cheaply as possible, giving them the minimum of food and attention. An exception must be made in the case of the many bulls which are to be seen in every town in the country wandering free about the streets, helping themselves from garbage tins and being fed also by the Hindus who worship them. These animals have been purchased when young by pious Hindus and turned adrift on the streets, where they spend the rest of their days free and absolved from any possibility of having to work.

The Hindu doctrine of transmigration of souls ensures good treatment for these animals, for they are supposed to be inhabited by the spirits of dead-and-gone Hindus. It would never do to be caught hitting one's grandfather on the nose with a stick, even if he did steal one's dinner with a dexterous lick of a fat red tongue !



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But respect and kindness begin and end with these four-legged "freemen" of the cities. Their wretched brothers and sisters must bear the yoke and pull the cart till they drop in their tracks. They bear on their bodies the mark of age-old serfdom, for every bull, bullock and cow in the land has a clearly defined hump just behind the place where the yoke presses so heavily.

Bullock-carts are the most general and economical form of Indian transport. They are to be seen in every part of the country, and almost invariably carry loads quite out of proportion to the size and strength of the wretched animals which draw them. Their pace is necessarily slow, but the Indian carter perched on the top of the load, by constantly beating the bullocks and by twisting their tails, gets them along the road as fast as they are able to move.

Water-buffaloes, those great ungainly creatures whose chief delight is to stand in the mud of a river with the water covering the whole of their bodies save only the tips of their snouts and their eyes, are pressed into service as draught animals. It is a scandalous thing that water-animals of this description should be allowed on the hot streets of Indian cities as beasts of burden. They may be seen moving slowly along, dragging heavily laden four-wheeled carts, the wheels sinking into the soft, sticky, tar-paved roads as the suffering animals drag themselves step by step along the burning pathway. Their eyes are bloodshot and rolling in agony, their huge tongues hang from their foam-flecked mouths; it is a sickening sight, and one which moves the newly arrived European to passionate anger.

Unfortunately sights of cruelty are so common that you get more or less used to them, and you gradually drop into the leisured methods of action and the stagnation of thought which life in the tropics engenders. Public opinion cannot thrive on such soil and the enervating climate is all against independence of thought



and action. This accounts in great measure for the attitude of the general public, which is almost universally indifferent to the sufferings of dumb animals in India. It is accepted as a matter of course, and many Europeans after a while do not appear to notice it save as a regrettable necessity which, while it may be mitigated to some slight extent, can never be wholly banished from the land.

This point of view is very difficult for the newly arrived European to understand. Whereas in England anyone practising cruelty to animals is considered a criminal, or at best a criminal lunatic, in India this cruelty is so common that at first sight it would appear that you had wandered into a gigantic lunatic asylum, or had reached Hell long before your time.

We in England are brought up in an atmosphere of kindness to animals. Almost every home has its pet dog or cat who is one of the family, a faithful friend and companion. Even the bunny in its hutch at the bottom of the garden is one of the household, much too fluffy and pretty ever to suffer the indignity of becoming the principal ingredient of a rabbit-pie. Therefore we cannot understand easily the mentality of a people such as the Indians, who hold that animals are not to be petted and made friends with, but either worshipped from afar or used merely as a means of personal profit to their owners.

Europeans naturally are appalled at the wanton cruelty to be seen in Indian streets; they wonder at the miserable-looking dogs and cats, thin, scraggy and half-starved, which scuttle out of the way as a human being approaches. They wonder at the crop-eared dogs of the villages of the United Provinces; at the sore-backed and sore-footed donkeys which stagger along under huge piles of washed and unwashed linen; at the miserable skinny horses drawing four fat Bengalis in a ramshackle *ghari*, the "points" of the wretched animals so obvious that you could hang your hat on any one of them.

Newcomers to India write to the Press about these



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things, or even take the law into their own hands and beat the carters with their own whips. This is quite useless as a general rule, and merely increases the police revenue by the proceeds of two fines instead of one.

The only effective procedure for the newcomer is to ally himself with one of the societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, of which there are twenty-five scattered throughout India, and by annual subscription and personal interest in the doings of the local society back up the endeavours of its officials.

By far the largest of these societies is to be found in Calcutta. The Calcutta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in the year 1861 by Mr Colesworthy Grant, an Englishman. It has grown enormously since those far-off days, and in 1924 dealt with nearly 40,000 animals. Over 26,000 cases of cruelty were brought before the Calcutta police courts, and in 25,000 of these cases convictions were obtained. These cases dealt with cruelty to animals in Calcutta alone, and all within a brief twelve months.

This is easily a world record, no less in cruelty than in its punishment.

But the efforts of the societies for the prevention and detection of cruelty to animals in India have a very difficult work to perform. They are hampered and obstructed on all hands by the prejudices and religious beliefs of Indians, which are supported by the law of the land. Let me give just one instance which came under my personal observation; it will be sufficient to show the kind of obstructions which all lovers of animals have to fight against in India.

One evening a horse bolted in Calcutta's main thoroughfare, smashing the vehicle which it was drawing, and bolting with the shafts only into a stone wall, breaking a leg and injuring its spine. In England the horse would of course immediately have been destroyed. Not so in India. Police came and looked at the tortured animal,



and took notes as to the damaged wall. Agents of the C.S.P.C.A. arrived and did all that was possible to relieve the animal's sufferings ; they also brought a humane cattle-killer to put the horse out of his misery. But this could not legally be done unless the owner of the animal was present and gave his consent. At length he came, but point-blank refused to give permission for the injured animal's destruction. He was a wealthy Indian merchant, and refused to listen to the veterinary surgeon's plea that the suffering animal should be put out of its misery. It was against his religion to take life, or allow any animal of his to be killed. If it was fatally injured it must die by inches ; and no amount of argument could shake the man's decision.

Meanwhile a great crowd had gathered, and a number of Europeans present were becoming indignant ; so at length the owner agreed to overcome the difficulty by giving the horse to one of them. An Indian lawyer in the crowd drew up a deed of gift on the spot, and had it legally witnessed and signed. The Indian owner then departed, and the European who was now the legal owner of the horse at once gave orders for its destruction. From first to last this tragedy had lasted over five hours ; such abominable cruelty being possible because the religious beliefs of Indians are more important than the cause of humanity, which is popularly, though erroneously, supposed to be the common attribute of all civilized communities. But it is tragic to think that such needless cruelty can take place with impunity beneath the Union Jack.

When Provincial Governments endeavour to obtain the assent of legislative councils to the passing of laws which will admit of the humane destruction of hopelessly injured or diseased animals without the consent of the owners, if such a course is advised by properly qualified veterinary surgeons, the attitude of the average Indian legislator is summed up in a sentence recently uttered by one of them in opposing such a Bill in the



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Bombay Legislative Council. This is a sample of the only sort of argument used against the Bill :

"I lament that sentiment and interest in the hereafter are so lacking in the hearts of the officials, and beg them to consider the souls of the poor creatures who are to be killed."

And the repugnance on the part of Indians to the taking of life applies equally to domestic animals and vermin ; for although it is now universally recognized that rats destroy stored grain, and are carriers of plague, these pests are most difficult to suppress. Indians, if left to themselves, will take no part in killing vermin, and they hate to be forced into a rat-killing campaign. Why, even fleas and lice are immune from destruction—they, too, are presumed to have souls ! You will hardly credit it, but it is a fact nevertheless, that wealthy Marwaris in Calcutta employ men to occupy their beds during the daytime in order to collect stray fleas and bugs on their bodies, so that when night comes the owner of the bed may rest in peace and not be tempted to kill any lively tormentor that might assail him.

It is difficult to reconcile this sentimental tenderness to vermin with the wholesale cruelty which Indians perpetrate on domestic animals used for draught purposes. Thoughtlessness is at the back of most of this conduct, or at any rate it is rare to find cases of deliberate cruelty for cruelty's sake. I refer to that kind of cruelty which occasionally comes before the Courts at home, when individuals are charged with deliberately and wantonly torturing a dumb animal. The Indian does not go out of his way to find an animal and then torture it ; his defect is that he is quite careless about all his possessions. Take motor-cars for instance. As long as his car runs at all no Indian will worry to oil and grease it. He will fill up with petrol and drive off "hell for leather," caring nothing for the condition of the roads and never thinking of inflating his car's tyres adequately. Thus



it is that when finally a car is put out of action and comes into the repair shop it will be found that in every possible sort of way it has gone wrong, and all because of sheer carelessness and inattention to the well-being of the machine.

Animals and machinery are merely means to an end—a purely commercial end—and the Indian takes the short view every time, failing to realize that a little attention periodically will make his possessions last longer and give better service. With his animals he can never be made to realize that a square deal should be given in return for the faithful, patient service rendered by the beasts day after day. Overloading is a constant expedient resorted to by carters, and the man chiefly responsible for this is the contractor who has tendered successfully for the work of transport. His endeavour is to load as much stuff as is possible on a minimum number of carts.

But the firms who give out the contract and own the goods have a moral responsibility which cannot be avoided. In only a very few cases do they take any real interest in the matter, and even then the job of supervising the loading of carts is delegated to a junior clerk, usually an Indian, or maybe an Anglo-Indian. The firm has, let us suppose, paid for the use of fifty carts for a given load, but the wily contractor brings round only thirty-five carts, which he overloads, and charges for the specified fifty. The supervisor winks at the swindle, after a few rupees have changed hands, and the convoy sets forth, the carters being told to proceed with the overladen vehicles as best they can.

Maybe some of them are caught practising cruelty during the trip in an endeavour to get their carts quickly to the journey's end. "Cruelly beating" will most probably be the charge; or the carts are taken to a weigh-bridge and found to be grossly overloaded, when the drivers will be charged with "overloading a pair of bullocks." The carter pleads "Guilty," and a small



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fine is inflicted by the magistrate. This fine will, in many cases, be paid by the contractor, who finds it pays him to do so because he is well in pocket on the deal. So the merry game goes on : it will continue to do so until the actual owner of the goods carried on overloaded carts is held responsible at law for all cases of this kind.

But even in cases where overloading is not forced on the carter he still cannot be kind to the animals in his charge. His sole idea is to get the cart to its destination in the time which suits him best. He cares nothing for sore withers or lameness, but plies his whip and twists the tails of his wretched animals to urge them on.

It is quite useless to try to educate these men, for many of them have not the intelligence of the dumb beasts in their charge. Many, too, are half-starved themselves, to judge by European standards, and the combination of empty head and empty stomach is not conducive to kindness to animals. But some are deliberately callous. Here is an instance which came under my own observation.

It was a very hot day, when the tarred roads were a soft mass of stickiness. There in the road lay a bullock, badly injured and bleeding, surrounded by a group of Bengalis. The animal had dropped from sheer exhaustion, and the carter had left it to lie there, going on his way, with his remaining bullock dragging the double load. Maybe he intended to return later in the day to see what had become of the fallen animal and to take it away if still alive.

In the meanwhile another bullock-cart had come along, and the driver thereof had driven quite unheedingly over the legs of the fallen animal, the iron tyre of the wheel tearing away completely one hoof of the unfortunate beast. The cart passed on its way, its driver taking not the slightest notice of the damage done. There the bullock lay in a pool of blood, and the group of gaping Indians made not the smallest effort to render assistance, or get help from anyone.



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I 'phoned a message to the C.S.P.C.A., and within a few minutes their ambulance came along and took the suffering animal to hospital.

Such scenes as this are common in Calcutta and throughout India, but many unfortunately occur where there is no help available so quickly, or indeed at all.

Societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals in India do not receive the same degree of support as similar institutions enjoy in England, where it is no uncommon thing for fortunes to be left them by benevolent persons. Quite recently the bulk of two large fortunes—one of forty thousand pounds and the other of twelve thousand pounds—have been left to the two principal English societies. How different it is in India, where in the whole of the sixty-five years of the Calcutta Society's existence only three legacies have been received. And they were not for thousands—not even hundreds—of pounds. One was for sixty-seven pounds, another for twenty pounds, and the third a paltry two pounds !

Yet in no country in the world could money be so well expended in the prevention of cruelty to animals. If it is needed in England, it is needed a thousandfold in India; and should any of you be making arrangements to leave your money to charitable societies on your decease, you might do much worse than leave a few thousands to the C.S.P.C.A., 276 Bowbazar Street, Calcutta. The president of this Society is an Englishman, a judge of the Calcutta High Court, and you may be sure that your gift will be well and wisely administered.

As matters stand at present the Society has to depend for its income on annual subscriptions, plus the grant of police court fines, inflicted in animal cruelty cases, which is now given the Society by the Bengal Government. How long this system will continue I know not, for the grant is made only from year to year, and is liable to cease at any time without notice. It is hardly likely to go on much longer, for the eyes of Indian politicians are looking



greedily towards any likely appropriations of money which may be diverted from its present purpose into channels which they more especially favour.

At best the present system can be looked upon only as a regrettable necessity, for it leaves the Society open to the taunt of instituting prosecutions for the sake of the fines which will be imposed, if convictions are obtained. If the general public of Calcutta were to subscribe at all largely towards the prevention of cruelty to animals there would be less need to rely on these Government grants in order to keep the Society going ; but, as matters stand, the sum total of the subscriptions received in a year is barely enough to keep the Society going for a couple of months.

The great majority of these subscriptions, as it is, come from Europeans. Indians give very little indeed ; they are not interested in preventing cruelty, but only in prolonging life in any form, no matter how wretched it may be. Thus it is that Indians support what are known in India as *pinjrapoles*—institutions where diseased and wounded animals may be taken to when unable to work.

If ever you should visit one of these places you will find it a veritable chamber of horrors. You will see cows hobbling about on three legs, their fourth being a partially amputated mass of sores and flies, while lying about in all directions will be animals in the last stages of disease dying miserably by inches. No animals are ever destroyed in these *pinjrapoles* ; they are fed and watered and turned into fields, where they linger on in agony, until at length they die even more miserably than they lived. For such horrors Indians will pay, but from a properly regulated society which really relieves pain and distress, and ends lives which are a burden to tortured bodies, they turn away in righteous horror.

Such is the strange mentality of the "spiritual" East. It can neither be understood nor radically altered by the Westerner, for professional holiness allied to filth, cruelty



and cunning is about all that is left of the much-vaunted civilization of the East.

I have told you of some of the cruelty, you probably have heard of the holiness, and if you wish to see some of the filth I would suggest that you pay a visit to the outskirts of Calcutta to see the conditions under which milk is produced. If you are fond of milk I will not insist on it; you will lose your liking for ever.

You will be able to motor most of the way there, but when you get to the milking grounds proper you must walk. You may leave your boots stuck in the mud if it is the wet season, so I advise a trip in the hot weather. As you walk over the rough ground you will meet coolies carrying milk pails, filthy to look at and covered with grass plucked from the wayside, to keep the milk from splashing out.

A series of mud huts of large size are the milking sheds; you will easily spot them unless there is something radically wrong with your sense of smell. The wretched cows are confined in these huts and tethered tightly together in rows. There they remain day and night for months at a time. They never come out at all until they are milked dry and ready for the butcher.

The state of filth these in places may be better imagined than described, and the sanitary conditions which prevail are a disgrace to the municipality which pretends to inspect and control them.

In nearly all these cowsheds the horrible practice of *phooka* goes on. It is a disgusting and illegal practice peculiar to Bengal, which has for its object the forcing of milk from a cow. Often have I been asked to describe what it actually consists of, but the methods adopted are so disgusting that I refrain from going into exact details.

Briefly, however, *phooka* consists in the insertion of a hollow bamboo, or other tube, into the vulva of the cow. Air is blown by this means into the animal, causing



internal distension and extreme irritation, which results in the cow quickly releasing all her milk.

Six months of this practice generally renders the cow dry and barren, when she is disposed of to the butcher, to appear on your table as "roast beef." No wonder most Europeans in India prefer mutton !

How to cope successfully with all the cruelty to animals which goes on in India is a problem that keeps all the preventive societies in the country busy every day in the year, and even so they can hope to touch only a fringe of the trouble. Only public opinion—Indian public opinion—can ever put a stop to it.

And there is something in the atmosphere which precludes the growth of healthy public opinion in the country. The steamy heat forms a veil over the eyes, or people are too busy with their everyday occupations and pleasures to give thought to other matters. You become very selfish in the East, and I fear the present generation is past praying for. It is in the education of the young that the solution of the cruelty question lies.

With the awakening of the national spirit in India better and more facilities for the education of children are sure to be attempted. And if in the new curriculum is included practical teaching of the proper and humane treatment of dumb animals, a lasting improvement may be anticipated throughout the country in the years to come.

It has been proved in England that such early lessons turn the naturally cruel child into a lover of animals. Almost every little boy is cruel to animals before he learns better. I can remember when some of us boys, for our diversion, used to pull the wings off flies and watch the miserable creatures crawl about in agony. I recollect also the swift punishment which followed when we were caught at the inhuman pastime, and the subsequent lecture on cruelty to animals. The mutilated flies were shown to us under a microscope ; their torn, twitching bodies were a revelation to our boyish minds,



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with their lack of thought and knowledge. From that day we were alive to the horror of the thing and were cruel no more.

There is not the slightest reason why Indian children should not be educated in this way also. They could be encouraged to keep animals as pets and treat them decently and take a pride in their condition and well-being. In the higher stages of education, when children are past the kindergarten, essays on kindness to animals might be written by the little ones, and prizes offered for the best efforts. Something of the kind is already being done in the English schools in India, which are attended by European children and Anglo-Indians. And the purely Indian schools could follow suit.

More also could be done in India in connexion with shows of cattle and animals generally. Prizes could be offered for the best-conditioned *ghari* horse, the best pair of bullocks, and so on.

Punishment of cruelty is necessary and unavoidable, but punishment alone will never alter the Indian outlook on animals. A changed outlook on the matter is necessary, and only education along right lines can ever bring this about.

Meanwhile India remains the despair of all lovers of animals.

Since writing the above I am glad to find that the Government of Bengal have entrusted the working of the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1920, the operation of which had been held up so long, to the Calcutta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. More than that, an amending Act has been passed which greatly strengthens the hands of the Society in dealing with the scandal of the water-buffaloes, who have so far been worked throughout the hot weather under intolerable conditions which were a disgrace to civilization.

By the operation of this amending Act it has been made illegal to use buffaloes for draught purposes between the



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hours of noon and 3 p.m. during the hottest and driest months of the year. Thus in April, May and June these poor creatures will be given a three hours' respite during the worst heat of the day. But I wish with all my heart that their use as draught animals had been prohibited in the streets of Calcutta altogether. That may come in time; and I can imagine the fight that must have been put up against the amending Act by representatives of the callous owners of buffaloes before even this concession to humanity was brought into effect.

Another benefit which accrues to the animals of Bengal under the operation of this Act is that now at long last the "permitter"—the fellow who actually reaps the benefit of an animal's suffering—can be prosecuted and punished for his callousness. This is a great thing, for in the past only too often the wretched carter was made the scapegoat of a person in a much more exalted position in life. This man sweated both animal and driver, and battered on the misery of both. Now the heavy penalties which can be inflicted on the individual chiefly responsible will be bound in the long run to act as a deterrent, and maybe there is hope that eventually the grosser forms of cruelty to animals will be eradicated.

In order properly to work the new Act it has been necessary for a new infirmary, for the treatment and detention of horses and cattle, to be erected. This building involved an expenditure of Rs10,000, and this expense had to be borne by the Authority working the Act. It was very largely owing to the expense and difficulties in carrying out its numerous provisions that this Act, passed some years ago, has not, until recently, been put into operation.

Another departure which will be very welcome is the decision of the Government of Bengal to make an annual grant to the C.S.P.C.A. of a sum of Rs120,000. This means that the Society is now assured of a certain minimum income, and will know more or less how its finances stand. Government will no longer have to be



asked, year by year, by the C.S.P.C.A. to allot them the police court fines collected from those convicted of cruelty to animals. These fines will in future be treated in the same way as fines for other breaches of the criminal law. An annual grant by Government to the C.S.P.C.A. removes once and for all the stigma which was bound to be attached to any institution that was allotted the fines for offences which its agents were the means of detecting and successfully prosecuting.

A fixed grant by Government is an acknowledgment of useful work done, whereas the old system was less equitable. No longer can it be suggested that the Society depends for its income on the number of convictions obtained and must press for heavy fines in order to replenish its own coffers with the proceeds.

This grant, however, will cover only the bare expenses incurred in the normal working of the Society. It allows nothing for emergencies, or expansion of activities in other parts of Bengal. Moreover, politics in India are so much in the melting-pot that it is not to be assumed that the annual grant will for ever be available. There is plenty of evidence to show that the Society is hated by many members of the Swaraj Party ; and if by some misfortune these people ever really got into power, and had full control of the revenues, there is little doubt that one of the first things they would do would be the cutting off of the grant for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

Thus it is that for several good and sufficient reasons the Society will always be in need of donations and subscriptions from the public. To do its work to the best possible advantage it must be financially strong, as is the Royal Society in England.

I trust this may some day be the case, although I have very little hope of such a desirable state of things in a country where animals are considered, in the bulk, as of no importance.



CHAPTER XIII

Things that annoy—*Pan*—Beggars—Noxious Insects—Insanitary Streets—The Megaphone Voice—Tom-toms and other “Music”—Moneylenders—Indian Touchiness—Floods

THE telephone has just been ringing. I rarely answer it myself, for my bearer is quite keen on the telephone, and as the message is likely to be in his own language, and an inquiry for someone who is not even known here, I gladly let him patter away to his heart's content. Sometimes I think that in a previous incarnation my young Hindu must have been a telephone operator; if not, he most certainly will strive hard to attain that office when next his spirit is clothed anew in fleshly form.

Perhaps once, or at most twice, a day it is really I who am wanted on the telephone, and then I am usually out; so these inward calls are quite futile as far as my bungalow is concerned, and all my neighbours tell the same story.

People who grumble about the telephone service in England should really come to India for a spell; they will then discover the very worst and go back contented with the service they get at home. It is by no means altogether the fault of the local operators—not by a long way; the principal trouble is that nowadays so many Indians are subscribers, and hopelessly misuse their instruments.

The 'phone is a new toy to the Indian, and he treats it as such. When he wants a bit of fun he rings up a likely number, possibly one which corresponds with the year of his birth, or the nearest he has been able to reckon the number. No Indian is ever sure of his exact age, and the white-haired old fellow, with one leg in the grave and the other entangled in his flowing grey beard, will unblushingly admit to thirty-five if you press him on



the point. Anyway, the Indian gets some number, and probably it proves to be yours—some folks get all the luck. However that may be, our Indian humorist gets the number asked for, and straightway commences to yell "Korn Hai?" at the top of his voice. The wretched subscriber whose ear is thus assailed may be unaware that "Korn Hai?" is intended to convey "Who is there?" Still, that matters not, for, sooner or later, he tumbles to the meaning of the sweet interrogation, and, when he can get a word in edgeways, replies as good-humouredly as the circumstances permit that he is Mr So-and-so. But as the only reply he ever receives is "Korn-Hai?" many times repeated, the unwilling listener finally gets thoroughly fed up and bangs down his receiver. There is a moment's respite—just sufficiently long to enable the man to get down to work or leisure again—when once more the telephone bell rings out in strident notes that brook no delay.

Sure enough it is Mr "Korn Hai" again. This time the now thoroughly angered listener tells him exactly his opinion of Indian subscribers in general and himself in particular. However, there is no satisfaction to be gained from this sort of thing: it is quite impossible to discover even who the tormentor is, so the distracted listener again replaces his receiver and takes refuge in flight; a run in the car and a cold drink at the club are probably indicated.

Yes, telephones are certainly one of the many things which annoy you in the East.

Then there is *pan* chewing. *Pan* is pronounced something like "parn." I think I mentioned elsewhere that it is a toothsome delicacy manufactured from the betel-nut and chewed assiduously by almost every Indian. Its qualities are many, but they consist chiefly in keeping the teeth clean and whole, and in supplying a certain nutriment which sustains the physical system between meals. But it is the spitting of the blood-red juice which annoys Europeans. On the pavements, on the walls of



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public and private buildings, in shops and offices, anywhere and everywhere, you come across the horrid stain. At first sight you take it for blood. As you see it spurt from the mouth of a passer-by you imagine that some ruffian has knocked out all the fellow's teeth. When you learn better, you most likely wish that he had.

Business houses, in order to keep clean their stair-cases and offices, are obliged, in self-protection, to place capacious buckets, half filled with sand, on each landing and in all public rooms, in order to stop the defilement of floors and walls. But unfortunately some of these marksmen could not hit a haystack. However, this is but one of the minor annoyances; there are plenty greater to which you never become even partially reconciled.

There are, for instance, beggars, especially the leprous ones, who are allowed in the streets and, worst of all, in the market-places, where eatables are exposed for sale. The police constables will not touch them, and these poor wretches lie or crawl about all day begging alms. There are a number of leper colonies, but apparently sufferers cannot be forced into becoming occupants.

Then there are other beggars, those whose parents have deliberately mutilated them in childhood in order that later on these poor creatures may be hawked round as objects of pity and a toll taken of every passer-by. Whole families are kept the year round by money extracted thus from the generous by these miscreants, who batten on the misery wilfully inflicted on their own offspring. Frequently limbs are cut off or twisted into permanent deformity; string is tied tightly round children's heads to make them swell; little ones are blinded. It is almost too horrible for belief, but these facts cannot be disputed. Of course people are punished if they are caught doing these things; but that is a very difficult matter in a country of 300,000,000, and an Indian will seldom give voluntary information to the police of the misdoings of a fellow-countryman, unless he himself is the aggrieved party.



And in addition to these horrors there are the ordinary beggars such as are to be found in all great cities. They annoy and pester visitors and residents alike. When arrested by the police and brought before an Indian magistrate the latter will almost always merely order the beggar's detention until the rising of the Court, which means that by dusk he is free to return to his old pitch again.

In India there is certainly no sincere attempt to put down begging. Beggars will always be there to annoy you, no matter where you may be.

To the European the bargaining habit of Eastern salesmen is at first most annoying. There is hardly such a thing known as a fixed price in any Indian shop or market; neither does the vendor of goods who haunts your bungalow ever ask the price he intends to take for his wares. He usually asks three times as much as he will take; so if you bid him half he is well up on the deal. But this sort of thing goes against the grain of the average European; he likes to know the worst right away and be done with it. And after a time you are thus persuaded into buying something you neither need nor really desire, just because the vendor has been haggling and offering so long you are sick of the very sight of him. The persistence of these itinerant salesmen is most disconcerting, for if your servants are not well trained they will allow the fellows to push right on to the verandah of your bungalow, sometimes even into the very house itself.

The impression is firmly established in Europe that India swarms with snakes, that they are all poisonous, and are met with daily as a matter of course. Certainly there are three hundred and fifteen known species of snake in the country, but the number seen depends on whether you live in the towns or in the jungle. And only a small percentage of Indian snakes are poisonous, but the general rule is to kill all or any at sight.

In actual practice cockroaches will cause the average European resident much more annoyance than snakes,



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for they will invade your bungalow at all times of the year. Some are large and some small, but all are filthy and unhealthy, as they crawl over garbage and then fly in at your windows and settle on any exposed food they can find. The insanitary condition of even the greatest of Indian cities is very largely responsible for the number of noxious insects and vermin; these revel in the heaps of garbage which are to be found at street corners and before almost every residence in the smaller streets.

Conditions prevail in many towns in India (which, according to the views of the municipality concerned, are only second in importance to London, Paris and other great European cities) which were never tolerated in desert camps in Mesopotamia, let alone in the city of Baghdad. These cities of India have corporations with a highly paid chairman and other permanent officials, yet the streets of the cities they govern are an offence to every decent passer-by, who dodges with difficulty the heaps of decaying vegetable and animal matter which lie around, emitting offensive odours and spreading disease germs.

Neither is anything done to check the abuses which are allowed to be perpetrated by the lower class of Indian, who fouls any and every street at will. The question of adequate lavatory accommodation in these cities is a very pressing one indeed. It is no wonder that outbreaks of smallpox and other epidemics occur periodically in congested areas. The only wonder is that these outbreaks are not more common.

The first year or so you are in the East the heat will not worry you very much, but every succeeding year you will feel it more oppressive as your blood becomes thinner and your powers of resistance weaken. In England you probably never realized you had a liver; you make the unwelcome discovery in India, and those people who make it a rule to sleep in the afternoon discover it soonest. It is when you have reached this stage that you find the antics of some new arrival particularly irritating.

A case in point comes readily to mind. It concerned a



newspaper man who was on night work, and who used to get home about midnight. He shared a small house with a man who had lately arrived from Scotland, and who worked in the daytime. This Scotsman made a point of early rising, and as his way to the bathroom, which the two men shared, lay through the journalist's room, the early riser would persist in being merry and bright at the latter's expense. Pausing in front of the bed he would go through some vigorous physical exercises, at the same time singing merrily and assuring the recumbent journalist that it was good to be alive. No doubt it was, but the tired occupant of the bed thought at the time it was much better to be asleep. The Scotsman thought it no end of a joke, but it did not last long, for the two men parted company at the end of the month.

It is seldom that you wake in the tropics feeling really refreshed. No matter at what time you retire to bed there is always a tendency next morning towards that "morning after the night before" feeling. Not until an hour or so after breakfast does the average Englishman feel really fit and at peace with the world. Lucky are those men who habitually breakfast alone, or if married have wives sufficiently understanding to leave them alone with the morning paper and their favourite breakfast dish, and not look for intelligent conversation at this time of the day. Those people who somehow or other manage to contrive to feel merry and bright in the early morning are usually very dull dogs in the evening. The day's work over, all they are fit for is a meal and bed. The wise folks say that you cannot burn the candle at both ends, so for my part I prefer burning it at the dark end of the day.

Yes, these cheerful early morning people can be very annoying.

Then there is the megaphone voice. Your gentle Indian knows not the meaning of soft speech, save when he is taken to task for some misdemeanour, or asked a simple question which he does not care to answer; then he will



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mutter unintelligible nothings in a whisper. But in the street he will bellow with the lungs of a "movie" director, and utter ear-splitting yells that for sheer power of penetration would make a steamer siren sound like a penny whistle.

Half the street noises of India emanate from dusky human throats, that scream conversation and interrogation across from pavement to pavement, or from house to house. If you venture to penetrate this intensive barrage of fiery rhetoric without taking the precaution of putting cotton-wool in your ears, some wretched fellow will do his best to render you stone-deaf by a "premature," which your unlucky ears have stopped in its flight. At night-time, should your flat or house be adjacent to one of the many little shops, called *busties*, wherein sit the sellers of *pan* and other delicacies, you will lie in bed an unwilling listener to all the Indian gossip of the neighbourhood; for these little shops, built into a niche or tacked on to some large building, like the mouths of their proprietors appear never to close.

I once had a bungalow with a small garden, the wall of which abutted on a main road. My bedroom was only about twenty yards away. Coolies laden with baskets of fruit and vegetables passed the garden-wall throughout the night, on their way to early morning market, and found that it was just the right height on which to rest their heavy burdens for a time, while they indulged in a friendly chat and cleared some of the dust out of their throats. My sleep was as often as not completely destroyed by the hoarse conversation and hawking and spitting that went on at intervals throughout the whole night. If I got out of bed and chased the fellows away more of their kind came a bit later, and the process had to be repeated. The most effective way of clearing the street was to drop an old electric bulb close by the group of chatterers. It went off like a bomb, and the result was indeed electrical.

The bulb horns used by most taxis in Indian cities are



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complete destroyers of peace and harmony. The Indian taxi-driver honks his merry way along whether there is traffic on the road or not. He honks to attract a likely fare: he honks at anything, everything, or nothing at all. And when the inevitable accident occurs through his reckless driving he seems to imagine that he will escape scot-free when he tells the police he "sounded horn."

The bulb horn has one equal for irritating monotony—the brain-fever bird. This pestilent fellow sits concealed in a tall tree and emits a honh-honh-honh! for hours and hours at a time. He gets his name from the statement, which I believe is founded on fact, that anyone who cannot get away from this monotonous noise will in time contract brain fever. I can well believe it, for the bird has driven me nearly crazy at times when I have been trying to get on with some work at home. The only way to stop the paralysing noise is to discover the tree in which sits the tormentor, and place your hand sharply on the bark. The bird will then cease to "sing," though how he realizes your presence, and why he should stop because you touch the tree, is a complete mystery.

Music is something which you will not appreciate in the East; and when I say "music" I do not mean the fox-trots you hear in hotels and restaurants, but the Eastern music of the streets. There are, of course, the tom-toms, or Indian drums, played by thumping the fingers smartly against the tightly stretched parchment placed across the ends of a sort of miniature beer-barrel. A crowd of Indians sit round on their "hunkers" in a semicircle and chant to this tom-toming, and maybe there are some reed pipes present, which add to the din. I sometimes wonder whether the exponents of extreme jazz music got their ideas from some such primitive gathering. Of course there is a real school of Eastern music, though personally it leaves me all on edge. I much prefer the imitation stuff which is dished up as the real thing in Eastern plays in London; it may not be true to life, but it sounds human to my philistine ear.



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Now I must say a word about the moneylenders of India, for they annoy a number of people, sometimes maybe not without just cause. They are not often mixed up with Europeans, but exist on the poverty and misfortune of the poor Indian, and are a menace to the whole community, though, like the ready lie, a very present help in trouble. These moneylenders are Kubulis; they are sons of Anak. All of them stand six feet or thereabouts in height, and they carry sticks nearly as high as themselves. They are muscular and quite fearless, many of them strangely handsome in a fierce, wild kind of way, with their curling black locks and piercing dark eyes. These men wear embroidered waistcoats over gay-coloured shirts, and go about coatless, with white, loose, baggy pantaloons caught in at the ankles. On their feet are large clog-shaped leather shoes, with spiky, turned-up toes.

By twos and threes they have drifted down to the Plains from their far-away mountain country and are scattered in all the populous parts of India. In Calcutta alone the Kabulis number several thousands. They find clients in plenty, for the native of India is always wanting money. He has a daughter to get off his hands; money is necessary to procure a husband. He has borrowed from a friend and must repay the loan, otherwise disgrace threatens him and his relations. The only *certain* lender is the Kabuli; so, with the knowledge that all other channels are closed to him, the humble clerk, the small shopkeeper and the operative at the jute mill alike fall easy victims to the great black spider.

A small sum, say Rs30, is required; only too easily is it obtained by the giving of a piece of paper promising to pay Rs50 on demand, and in the meantime interest at the rate of two annas in the rupee every month until the promised Rs50 has been paid and the transaction closed. In many cases this interest runs on for years, for the wretched borrower finds it impossible to raise the necessary Rs50 to wipe off the debt. The first month's



interest is invariably deducted in advance from the principal, only the balance being paid over to the unfortunate borrower.

The first of the following month sees the Kabuli waiting outside the office or mill wherein his victim is employed. With him is another of his tribe, for these men usually hunt in couples, even though no other clients are inside. The debtor is duly buttonholed on emerging from his work, and the instalment due demanded then and there from the small wages which have just been paid over to him for the past month's work in the mill. Woe betide the borrower who defaults, for the big sticks are not carried merely as ornaments ; more than once a wretched defaulter has been beaten to death, and his assailants have escaped scot-free.

The Kabulis live together, and shelter themselves and their wealth behind a strong trade union. They meet each week in some sheltered spot and discuss their clients ; the enemy of one is the enemy of all, and woe betide the defaulter ! If he fails to pay the interest due, a group of Kabulis visit him ; if their threats fail to bring results, Kabulis haunt his place of residence and picket the office or mill at which he works. They make his life a burden in every possible way until he pays the interest due, and by their presence they place the man's job in jeopardy, for employers are not anxious to retain the services of men in the clutches of the Kabulis, who are a menace to commercial morality and a nuisance to the entire community.

Europeans are frequently amused at the susceptibility of Indians to any form of criticism ; they are much too apt to take offence where none is meant. In this respect Bengalis are perhaps the worst of all, for they take themselves so seriously as to attribute the slightest criticism on the part of Europeans to racial hatred. Praise and flattery, however fulsome, are always welcome ; but criticism, however true and well intentioned, cannot be borne, whether it be humorous or not.



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This attitude could be justified only if Indians were really completely above criticism, but surely no people are in such an enviable position as to be pronounced perfect by their fellow-humans. The Indian attitude shows a sad lack of proportion and a very defective sense of humour. It is not disputed that Indians have many good points, but assuredly a sense of humour is not one of them; and the foolish pretension that they lead the world in thought and culture is proof positive that Indians have no sense of the ridiculous. We Europeans do not take anything too seriously, not even ourselves or our own country, as witness *Punch* and other humorous publications. But in no part of India do you find any such papers; neither would they stand the ghost of a chance of survival if they were born and sponsored by Indians for Indians.

Englishmen are noted for their good-humoured chaff of one another; a little healthy leg-pulling is a fine form of exercise. The Bengali simply hates to have his leg pulled, for fear it might come off in the process. Yet these susceptible people, who hate to hear their unpractical political beliefs and slack ways of municipal government criticized, are extremely bitter in speech and action towards one another. In no country are elections conducted in such an atmosphere of personal hatred and acrid controversy as is the case in Bengal and India generally. Yet the mildest form of criticism, levelled quite good-humouredly at Indians by a European, is taken up as a national insult. It is fortunate that Scotsmen are not sensitive in this way; all an Englishman's best jokes are at the expense of his friends over the Border. Does the Scotsman object? Rather does he cap the story by another and better one against himself! And what about the Jews? They take all the chaff about themselves in excellent humour! Why then should the Bengalis object to a few jokes at their expense, or cavil at some suggestions which, if laid to heart, might improve their national characteristics?



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This absurd touchiness on the part of Indians in itself invites ridicule, as does the attitude of superiority they like to assume when talking about their country's ancient civilization, which they like to imagine is still virile. All the ordinary man notices is its decrepitude. Ancient it undoubtedly is, but moth-eaten; and about as much use in the cross-currents of everyday life as Noah's Ark would be in the Atlantic.

The Bengali's sense of humour is essentially childish and primitive, when it exists at all. If he can play a successful practical joke on one of his fellows he roars with delight at the other's discomfiture. For the Indian never really grows up; he remains a child all his life. He likes to be petted and stroked, and told what a good little boy he is, how clever and how original; but a word of rebuke or healthy criticism sends him into a tantrum which presently develops into sulks, which endure until some other supposed "insult" goads him into fresh fits of temper.

Truly these people can be very trying, especially just before the rains come.

Mention of the rains reminds me that when at length the period of excessive heat is at an end, and a grateful coolness sweeps over the land, you will once more feel that life is worth living. Prickly-heat will vanish, though maybe not all at once; and if you are in torment, and long to be rid of it, the wise-heads say you should strip and stand naked in this first downpour. I cannot speak from experience, but the experiment might be worth trying, if you have sufficient privacy and courage to venture on this speedy and pleasant cure.

But the rains have certain disadvantages. If your bungalow is not well raised above the ground you will probably be flooded out. I know a man who keeps a boat in his garden for use during heavy rains, for only by this means is he able to get from his front door to the main gate across the compound. It is quite the usual thing for the streets in the large cities to be axle-deep



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in water, and lucky are those owners of motor-cars whose magnetos are set in a position sufficiently high to be above flood-level. If you get stuck in a good flood you must either get out and wade almost waist-high through the water, or sit tight till the flood subsides.

I knew a party of four fellows who were returning home in a car from the theatre through the floods when their engine conked out. They decided to stay in the car, and were discovered next morning fast asleep in their dress-clothes. The water having subsided, and the sun being sufficiently strong to have dried the magneto, they were able to proceed home, and arrived in sufficient time to get changed, have breakfast, and drive down to office none the worse for the little adventure.

It is no unusual sight to see visitors staying at hotels being carried on the shoulders of hefty coolies from their hotel to a waiting *ghari*, for the whole ground floor of these places is often under water during the heavy rains. No drainage system yet devised can cope quickly enough with the floods of water which pour down when the monsoon breaks in good earnest ; and frequently whole streets have their surfaces completely broken up. Particularly is this the case where wood-paving is employed, and the wooden blocks are seen floating about like children's toys in a bath. It is at these times that the despised horse *ghari* comes into its own, for it can go through flooded streets which are quite impassable to most motor-cars.

The rainy season tests the roofs of bungalows beyond what most of them can bear. You frequently want every pot and pan in the place to catch the rain, which enters at every weak spot. It is a worrying time for landlord and tenant alike.

During the rains you find that matches become damp ; the heads fly off and refuse to ignite. A remedy for this trouble is to put your supply of match-boxes in a gas oven—after the gas has been turned off. But you cannot do that with your clothes and boots, which soon become coated with a green mould. The only remedy for this



state of things is to take advantage of every bit of sunshine that comes along—and even in the rains there are few days when some strong sunshine is not available—and put every personal belonging out in the garden. A good bearer does this sort of thing without telling, and if he is up to his job you will find your clothing no worse for the rains. But you will not be able to get rid of a fusty smell which pervades the place as long as the rains last, which is usually a matter of three months; so that little annoyance must be put up with, and be the penance paid by you for frequent grumbles at the hot weather.

The strange thing about the Indian weather, which will never fail to give cause for wonderment to dwellers in temperate zones, is the undoubted fact that the hottest weather is invariably the most healthy for human beings. True, it saps your energy, but it spares your life.

The storms which accompany or immediately precede the rainy season in India are frequently of great ferocity. The hot weather of 1926 was broken by a veritable cyclone which heralded the monsoon's arrival. It followed the hottest day of the year in Calcutta, when the thermometer registered 104° in the shade, and proved the most alarming cyclonic gale experienced in Bengal for years. It created great havoc, particularly in the river and at the Kidderpore docks. Amazing scenes were witnessed at these docks, where eight liners, of from 5000 to 8000 tons each, broke from their moorings, and sank seven heavily laden country boats before they could be got under control. Steel hawsers snapped like so much string, and it was only by reason of a sudden cessation of the hurricane that a really serious disaster was narrowly averted. As it was, a crane hurled from the jetty sank the Port Commissioners' launch, and also a country boat, resulting in the death of four men. A large steamship was driven aground, and many small boats were sunk in the river and lost.

On the *maidan* a remarkable spectacle was witnessed. During heavy storms some trees inevitably give way,



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but in the course of this particular storm literally dozens of giant trees, which had successfully weathered the storms of fifty or more years, were torn up by the roots and flung about the *maidan* like toys. Trees along the streets also were uprooted, and fell across the tram-lines, putting a stop to traffic for several hours. Hundreds of telephone wires were torn down, and the main power-station was affected to such an extent that lights and fans did not function for several hours. The force of this cyclonic gale may be estimated by the fact that heavy wagons were blown off the railway lines, and several huge cranes were overthrown.

The monsoon of 1926 took an unusually heavy toll of life and property throughout India and Burma. The rice crop was destroyed, and a succession of other disasters made the year memorable in the history of Indian monsoons. There were many breaches in the railway, and the tea districts were entirely cut off from Bengal. Extensive floods in Orissa seriously damaged the crops, and unprecedented inundation and havoc were suffered in Karachi and the surrounding district. In the Punjab more than one thousand houses were destroyed and practically all the crops were ruined. It was necessary for Government to grant relief, both in food and by loans, to an unprecedented extent, and many thousands of volunteer workers were kept busy in the stricken areas.

Luckily all monsoons are not as bad as this one, but tropical storms are always more or less terrifying to sensitive people and young children. The lightning is terrific; so is the thunder. The whole house seems to rock at each electrical outburst. On the whole it is safer to be indoors than out, though in hot countries there are no coal cellars in which the timorous can seek shelter and a mythical immunity from danger.

These tropical thunderstorms are most terrifying at night, and it is quite impossible for even the soundest of sleepers to remain unconscious of a racket that would wake the dead, and vivid flashes which light up every-



thing in the room as if it were broad daylight. Truly there is a viciousness about these electrical disturbances in the East which make the thunderstorms of temperate zones seem by comparison very mild affairs. So the monsoon may at first terrify the newcomer to the tropics. When it merely annoys him he will have ceased seriously to trouble about thunder, lightning and sudden death. He becomes a fatalist, like most of us do in the East.

The Englishman loves a grouse, whether he lives at home or abroad, and these many little things which annoy you when living in India quickly fade into their proper perspective when you are back in England once again. Then at home or at the club you will be talking of old times over a *peg*, surrounded by some kindred spirits from your part of the world. It is a hundred to one that rain will be falling steadily outside, and you will huddle over the fire getting what warmth you can, knowing full well that there will be no warm sun on the morrow to thaw your damp bones.

Then you will think longingly of India and its glorious sun : you will recall to mind that even during the monsoon there was always strong sun for at least an hour or two each day ; you will have forgotten all the little things which used to annoy you out East and a memory of only the good things will remain.

"Man never is, but always to be blessed." You will find it true of India as elsewhere, and maybe more quickly realize the many advantages life in the East can grant if your leave in England chances to coincide with a really wet summer.

I shiver at the recollection, and though I write in tropical heat yet I am content.



CHAPTER XIV

The Shoemakers of India—Letters—Indian Credulity—The World's Oldest Woman—Indian Magic—The Rope Trick—Fakirs

INDIA, and the East generally, is not a good place for the shoemaker. For one thing a very large proportion of the population go barefooted from the cradle to the grave; and even those who have adopted footwear are content with one pair of crude and very clumsy shoes, which are worn continuously until they drop to pieces from sheer old age. Strangely enough, it is the uppers which give way before the soles. This is largely to be accounted for by the extreme heat, which quickly takes the nature and suppleness out of leather, and causes hardness and inevitable cracking. And as the last thing which occurs to the average Indian is to take care of anything, his acquaintance with polish and elbow grease is of the very slightest. This neglect, combined with an average temperature of nearly 100° in the shade for many months in the year, plays havoc with upper leather.

The Indian craftsman, or *mochee* as the shoemaker is called, usually combines bootmaking and repairing with harness work. He is a willing enough fellow, but hopelessly slow and clumsy at his work. The shoes he turns out are crude in the extreme, and as a rule he can do little more than make boat-like slippers, which only fit where they chance to touch. His customers are confined principally to the poorer class of his own countrymen; for, truth to tell, the lower-class Indian does not take kindly to the wearing of footwear of any kind. He plays football, and often cricket, in bare feet, and on hard ground can run like a hare and kick with the best,



though on wet ground his lack of footwear tells against him.

As in sport, so in business : the Indian clerk going to office during the rainy season may frequently be seen carrying his shoes in one hand and his umbrella in the other. His bare feet will dry—quicker than would wet shoes ; moreover they need no polishing—not that in any circumstances the shoes would receive much attention, for those seen are usually ingrained with the dust of many hot weathers.

Of boot factories in India there are but few. At Cawnpore there has been one for many years, while in recent times a modern boot factory has been built in Calcutta and equipped with the latest machines, though it is a quite medium class of footwear which is being manufactured.

Most Europeans in India buy their shoes from European shops, which stock many of the best-known British brands ; but a good many residents prefer to have their footwear made for them by Chinamen, who are very clever at this work. John Chinaman is a good business man, thrifty, and a great worker, and thus has attracted most of the bespoke work which is to be obtained. He makes it easy and attractive for you to patronize him ; he gives excellent value for money, and what he promises to do he fulfils to the letter.

He usually calls at your flat or bungalow in the early evening, when, after a weary day at the office, you have returned home altogether parched, and more or less irritable. But John knows better than to thrust his presence on you ; he waits while you have your cold plunge. He is still invisible and unannounced while you quench your thirst from a long tumbler of the most icy-cold whisky-and-soda a well-trained bearer can produce. Then, as the bearer brings in your second drink he discreetly informs you that John is without and seeks the honour of an interview. By this time you are feeling quite at peace with the world, and



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the promised distraction is welcome, for this is the "off" hour before dinner.

John is ushered in, bringing with him a fine assortment of samples in box and willow calf, patent leather and glacé kid, all of excellent quality. The shoes are well finished, and although the soles are of sufficient thickness, the shoes are light to handle. Having admired his wares, you bargain and bandy words with the shoemaker. John is a humorist and likes a joke, even at his own expense, so, having agreed on a price, which is really astonishingly cheap, he will measure your feet, and promise delivery of the shoes on a given day. He keeps his word too; and you have no reason to regret, either then or thereafter, your dealings with him. John is very accommodating also in the matter of payment, and will not worry you for a month, or even two—an accommodation much appreciated in the East.

So good are these shoes made by the Chinaman that I know several retired officials from India who invariably have their footwear sent home to them in England regularly from the particular Chinese shoemaker who has made their shoes for many years. But as far as making for the masses goes, no one is ever likely to make a fortune out of shoemaking in India. Shoes are worn more for ornament than use, and on every possible occasion are discarded by their Indian owners, who will never buy a new pair as long as the old ones contrive to hold together, and are sufficiently strong to be carried as a sign of respectability.

Neither do Europeans wear out much shoe-leather. I can remember but two occasions when I sent shoes to be soled and heeled. Once was in Mesopotamia during the war, when a regimental shoemaker did a job for me very thoroughly; and once afterwards in Calcutta, when a Chinaman did the same sort of job equally well. True, rubber tips were needed occasionally for the heels, but the soles simply refused to wear out.

This economy is largely accounted for by the fact that,



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save when playing games or when dancing, the average European rarely uses his feet at all; the seats of his trousers wear out more quickly than do the soles of his shoes. I think the race-course, or at all events that part round the betting ring which is covered with gravel, takes more wear from the shoes of the average European than does any other ground in Calcutta. But then racing also accounts for very many worn-out pockets.

I have mentioned elsewhere that Indian servants of all kinds are obsessed with the belief that their European masters are in a position to find jobs for all the friends and relatives of their staff. And not only your servants, but men of whom you have never even heard bombard your house and office daily with petitions and letters praying for work and preferment for themselves and their relations. These letters are couched in flattering language and with a desire to please; you find yourself addressed in strange terms and given titles which you neither deserve nor desire. Here is one, reproduced word for word, which will serve as a sample of many that I have received from time to time.

To,

HIS EXCELLENCY THE RIGHT HONBLE SIR BROWN

May it please your Excellency.

I the under mentioned poor clerk beg most respectfully to approach your Excellency with the earnest request that your Excellency will be pleased to consider my case with favourably, I have none in this world to recommend anybody your Excellency's name with the epithet "Saviour of India."

During the term of the most responsible works entrusted to your Excellency's care, your Excellency has done many things that will develop themselves at no distant date, and improve the material prosperity of the country. Under the circumstances if you kindly grant me any job under your kind consideration it will give your Excellency pure and genuine gratification at home,



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whether your Excellency be in the midst of domestic circle or political arena.

Regarding my qualifications I have served many offices in Calcutta, Ledger, Type, Record, Goods despatcher. I have got certificates for the same.

As in duty bound, I shall ever pray etc.,

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your most obedient servant

The name and address were of some man of whom I had never even heard, and no copies of testimonials were sent. Indians rarely study essentials, but hope by flattery and persistence to obtain their desires. This letter was sent by a presumably educated man; the handwriting was almost perfect copperplate in style. But what use would a man of this kind have been in my office ?

Another letter, but of a quite different kind, shows that gratitude for favours received is rather spoiled by flattery and the anticipation of further benefits. It came to me when I was on service in Mesopot, and was sent by the father of one of my men who had lately recovered from a spell of fever. I reproduce it exactly as received, though it credits me with a higher rank than I actually held at the time ; incidentally, the envelope was unstamped, and I had to pay double postage in consequence.

COLONEL A. C. BROWN.
KIRKUK.
FIELD POST OFFICE 401.
MESOPOTAMIA.

LAHORE.
11-8-19

REVERED SIR,

I beg to express my heart-felt gratitude for the noble and sympathetic treatment that you have accorded to my son and your most obedient servant Sayad Rijaz Ali Shah in his recent illness.

Human race can reasonably be proud of men of your moral fibre. I cannot adequately express appreciation of



your sincere and self-less attitude towards my son. Had it not been for your kindness, he would have greatly suffered in a strange and distant country. By these instances of magnanimity and kindness you not only oblige me to your person, but impress me a great deal with the nobility of your national character. I place every confidence in you, and my trust in your disinterestedness is unbounded.

From the various letters I have received from Rijaz Ali Shah I have come to conclude that the climate of Mesopotamia has been uncongenial to him and that his health is deranged. If you think it advantageous for his health to return home I hope that you will allow him to come back. Being an old man I do not wish to suffer any shock an account of Rijaz Ali Shah, who is my only son. The matter is however left to your noble consideration, for you who have been so good to him in the past take as much interest in his well-being as I do.

You have been a guardian angel to a helpless person in a strange country. May God Almighty reward you for this beneficent behaviour.

Cherishing respectful feelings for your exemplary conduct and praying for your good health,

I beg to remain,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

(Pensioner Post Master).

I am sorry to have to add that I was unable to accede to this request, for I was short of men at the time, and our little job at Kirkuk was not complete by a long way. But I trust that in the fullness of time Rijaz Ali Shah was restored to his old father safe and sound. He was a good fellow, evidently a chip off a good old block.

The credulity of many Indians is almost past belief. Even legal luminaries high up in their profession are not



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exempt. Can you imagine a murderer in England setting up a plea that he imagined the man he killed was a ghost, and, moreover, getting away with the yarn? Yet this plea was put forward successfully in a trial before the Lahore High Court.

Great interest was aroused throughout India by the result of this trial. The facts were not disputed, and the truly remarkable judgment of the Court concluded with these words :

"The decision of the Court is that the slayer acted in good faith, believing that the object of his attack was not a human being but a ghost; that the object of homicide can be a living being only : therefore the accused is entitled to acquittal."

A different form of credulity is instanced by the following account of an occurrence in a small village in the Noakali district of Bengal. It was thus communicated to the Calcutta newspaper, *Bengalee*, by a local correspondent :

"Authentic report has been received here about a strange freak of nature occurring in village Karathil in this district. On Friday the 16th inst. a young woman aged about eighteen was delivered of a creature exactly similar in appearance to a tiger cub, measuring $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in length, and with four legs, tail, scanty furs on the shoulder, prominent eyes, etc. The creature, which was alive at birth, was, it is said, thrown out of the lying-in room by the midwife in fear, when it died, and had one of its ears eaten by a dog or cat.

"A doctor of Sahapur village has preserved it in spirit, and people are flocking here daily to have a look at it. Some gentlemen from the town, having had occasion to go to the locality on business, also saw it, and the news having been confirmed by them is being sent to the Press for publication. Arrangements are being made for its removal to town. The young woman, since she came to know of the strange creature to which she gave birth, has been getting violent fits, and is lying in a precarious condition."



An Indian's age is always more likely to be underestimated than overestimated. As census figures are official, and therefore entitled to respect, I have no hesitation in giving the official history of a woman whose age is surely unique.

Quite recently I read of the world's oldest man dying somewhere in Turkey at the ripe old age of 140, but North India held the record for the world's oldest woman in 1921, and if she is still alive it will indeed be amazing, for she must now be the world's oldest inhabitant.

During the census operations of 1921 in Sikkim it was officially recorded thus :

"A Hindu woman named Ruka, caste Brahmin, village Simik, charge No. 1 Block No. 15, is aged 140. She is the original inhabitant of Khaptuwa, a village in Nepal. She was in her youth quite fair, but now, owing to advanced age, is much darker. Her eyesight is defective, she being able to see only large objects, and she hears with difficulty, but keeps fair health, and can eat and digest ordinary food.

"All her teeth have fallen out, except one in the upper jaw and one in the lower. She had fresh teeth at the age of 120, but they fell out after three or four years. She is now getting fresh teeth for the third time. The two remaining teeth are originals.

"She is able to attend to light housework and can still walk short distances. She first married at the age of 16 and bore her first husband, who has now been dead 40 years, five sons and four daughters. Two sons and two daughters still survive, but all are feeble and decrepit. Due to old age the two sons are unable to work and their old mother Ruka maintains them by begging."

It is difficult to doubt the truth of all this, for time and again when I have asked a grey-haired old Indian his age he has mentioned something between twenty and thirty ; but I have never known a youngster pose as a middle-



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aged man, nor a man of fifty or thereabouts lay claim to being a centenarian.

There is very little in the way of magic or illusions on the part of Indian conjurers worthy of mention. India has no Maskelyne, no Lafayette ; no Horace Goldin and no Leipsig. The cleverest conjurer I have seen in the East was a major in the Indian Army, who did some really astonishing things with cards after dinner one night in the Mess. I believe that once when he was home on leave, finding himself more than usually hard up, he took a professional engagement at a prominent London music-hall and did extraordinarily well. He got a wiggling from the War Office for his temerity, but a nice fat cheque proved ample compensation.

As far as Indian conjurers' exhibitions go, I must confess to disappointment. True, these men have few "props," and even fewer clothes, but their assistant is never very far away ; and most of the tricks performed are very amateurish, while the more ambitious are certainly produced in much better style in England. A really good English illusionist would make these Indian magicians jump out of their skins from sheer fright. The mango trick has been performed on the English stage, and so have most of the Indian tricks which are worthy of reproduction. But I never heard of any Indian conjurer who was sufficiently expert, or entertaining, to justify an appearance before a London audience.

In this connexion you naturally think of the famous Indian rope trick. That, you will say, has never been performed by any European illusionist. Possibly not. But on the other hand the rope trick has never been performed in Europe by any Indian. Large sums of money have been offered in India to anyone who would come forward and agree to voyage to England and give performances of this trick ; but the thing has yet to be done.

True, at the time of the British Empire Exhibition at



Wembley an Indian conjurer was brought over to perform at the Indian Pavilion there. Whether his pretensions to perform the rope trick were tried out before he embarked I cannot say, but I feel pretty confident they were not put to the test. The fellow would bluff in true Oriental style and get away with it under some pretext of caste, custom or ca' canny. The plain facts are that when the man arrived in London and gave a trial performance before the officials of the Exhibition he failed to impress; indeed he could not manage the trick at all, and the idea of showing visitors to the Indian Pavilion a sample of real Eastern magic had to be abandoned. I never heard what became of the fellow, but no doubt he was sent back to India at the expense of the Exhibition authorities, and had the laugh on his side.

Famous English illusionists have travelled to India for the express object of finding some man who could do this rope trick. They have offered every possible inducement, have advertised widely and searched in the most exhaustive manner possible to locate this wonder-worker of the East, but all to no avail. Why, even the Prince of Wales himself was not sufficiently attractive to induce a performer of the rope trick to come forward and show his prowess! During the Indian tour of His Royal Highness the whole country was combed in an attempt to find a man who would thus uphold the honour of Eastern conjurers, but all in vain.

What, then, is this rope trick? Trick it undoubtedly is, and a few Europeans have testified to having seen it for themselves, though for every one who says he has seen it there are a score who aver that a friend of a friend of an acquaintance of theirs knows somebody else who was a relative of a man who actually witnessed the performance of the rope trick. It is rather like the war yarn of the Russians who travelled the length of Great Britain: nobody actually saw them, but lots of people had friends, far removed to the umpteenth degree, who saw the men and knew they were Russians, for they spoke to them in



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Russian, and watched the fellows stamp snow off their boots on some wayside station platform !

So it is with the rope trick ; it is more talked about than seen. But nevertheless there is a certain amount of truth in the story of this Eastern magic. Let me give you the evidence of three Europeans, all of whom have actually seen the trick with their own eyes. One of these people I know myself, the other two have published their experiences of the performance.

Lady Waghorn wrote a short article in *The Daily Mail* a year or two ago, in which she bore testimony to the genuineness of the rope trick. In the course of this article Lady Waghorn wrote :

“ But I for one have no such doubts. Though what I saw happened long ago, the scene is as clear now as the day I saw it.

“ In 1892 I was living in an isolated place in the Madras Presidency in India, when one day the servant came to ask if I would like to see a native conjurer who was walking on his way to Calcutta.

“ After doing, uncommonly well, certain tricks which I had seen before, he concluded with the rope trick.

“ Watching from the plinth of the bungalow, about 3 feet above the garden and about 15 feet from the magician, I saw a fairly stout rope thrown up about 11 or 12 feet into the air. It became rigid, and a boy of about twelve climbed up and vanished at the top. A few minutes later he reappeared in the branches of a mango-tree in the garden 100 yards away.

“ Besides the servants belonging to the compound only one other person was with me at the time, but we both saw exactly the same thing. What, I wonder, is the explanation.”

The second testimony was given to me by Mr Bodalin, a Dutchman living in Calcutta. I recollect sitting with him in Peliti's one evening and discussing the matter till we both forgot our dinner-time was past. He is an eminently sound and practical man, neither is he given to



romancing, nor does he fail to take plenty of soda with his whisky. He was telling me of the first week he spent in Calcutta. It was a good many years ago, and he was new to the East as well as to India.

Walking down Chowringhi one hot summer's afternoon his attention was arrested by a small crowd of Indians collected on the *maidan* opposite. He was curious, so crossed the road and joined the throng. There was, as far as he can recollect, no other European present. In the centre of the crowd a space had been cleared, and a half-naked Indian was showing his audience a basket, a boy, and a piece of rope coiled inside the basket. Mr Bodalin's experience was very similar to that described by Lady Waghorn, save only that after the boy had apparently ascended the rigid rope the conjurer himself ran up the rope and shouted to the boy to come down. There was no reply, so the conjurer in a rage whipped out a knife and slashed it wildly above his head. When he slid down the rope the knife in his hand was dripping with what appeared to be blood. The man coolly dug the blade into the ground and cleansed it, while the horrified onlookers shouted that he had murdered the boy. Fortunately, before any reprisals could be attempted, the boy himself appeared, forcing his way to the centre from the outskirts of the crowd; whereupon the amazed audience paid cheerful tribute in silver to the skill of the illusionist, whom a moment before they had been ready to hand over to the police. My friend was frankly confounded by the whole procedure, and, beyond admitting that the sun was in his eyes a bit at the time, could not doubt that what he saw had actually happened.

After he had related his story I gave him the explanation I will now give you. It is not really mine, but the actual testimony of a gentleman who, at the time he saw the rope trick performed, was Commissioner of Police in Calcutta. Colonel Barnard, for such was his name, related his experience many times. I have seen it in



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print on several occasions, but, for the sake of those who have not, I will tell the Colonel's story in my own words. It really solves once and for all the mystery of the rope trick.

The Colonel was invited to attend a private performance of this trick in the backyard of an Indian house in Calcutta. He asked another police officer to accompany him, and managed to take unobserved a small kodak also.

The yard of this house had high walls, which were whitewashed, affording an excellent background, and while the performance was going on the Colonel managed to secure several capital snapshots of the proceedings. He saw the conjurer, the rope and the boy. He saw the rope thrown into the air; he saw it remain vertical and rigid. He saw the boy climb the rope and disappear into the air above. And a few moments later he saw the boy reappear, large as life, and stand again by the side of the conjurer. He was frankly amazed, and said so; but when he developed those negatives he found that the camera had not seen as much as its master. There was the boy and the conjurer, but the rope was on the ground at the very moment when the Colonel had seen it in the air. And the boy also was on the ground—shown clearly on each negative. As the camera cannot lie, its evidence had to be believed; so the only explanation possible is that the whole affair was an optical illusion. In other words, everybody knows what the rope trick is; they see what they expect and want to see, and are self-hypnotized. The glare of the sun does the rest, for your Indian conjurer is careful to place his back to the sun in such cases.

So perhaps after all these years the trick is played out. Whether that is so or not, I cannot tell you where you can see the thing done for yourselves, for I have never seen it, and most probably never shall.

A much more obvious fake, which comes under a rather different category, is that of the snake-charmers. These



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men mostly are frauds, and the reptiles they handle are perfectly harmless.

The so-called snake-charmer produces a small reed pipe and plays some weird music, whereupon the snake pokes up the light lid of his wicker basket, rears himself in the air, and shoots out his *tongue* in magnificent fashion. You think these are the rapid strokes of poison fangs. Not a bit of it. The real poison fangs have long ago been extracted by genuine snake-charmers, who live in the jungle, and at considerable risk seek out and render harmless numbers of snakes, which are then sold to the townsmen, who make a fat living, exhibiting their pets to credulous tourists.

When you meet a gaunt, long-haired man clothed in nought save a loin-cloth, and with dried mud plastered on head and body, you see in him a holy man of India. "Fakir" is the popular name for the individual who affects this special brand of piety. Needless to say, it is not the sort of thing which will impress a European, but to the average Indian these fakirs are considered worthy of the greatest respect and veneration. They carry nothing with them save maybe a stick, and their little tin pan, which serves alike as a drinking vessel and a collection box.

It is considered the duty of all Indians to give what they can afford in the way of money or food to all fakirs whom they come across. Many of these religious devotees carry the practice of mortification of the flesh to great lengths. Some will sit outside temples with one arm raised overhead, day after day, month after month, and year after year. At length the arm withers, atrophy sets in, and the limb becomes fast set and useless.

Another way of showing his contempt for comfort, and all the joys to which normal flesh is heir, is for the holy man to make his bed on nails driven point upwards through stout planks. He lies down carefully on this instrument of torture and remains in a recumbent



position for many hours on end. His head is supported by a wooden "pillow," but the rest of his body is in continual contact with the nails. Some people say these nails are not sharp; possibly they are not, but I cannot conceive that they are much the less uncomfortable on that account. This mortification of the flesh is carried on, not in some secret place, but on the pavements of the principal cities; the more public the place the better pleased is the fakir, that his piety may be seen, appreciated and suitably rewarded by all men.

To anyone brought up in a Christian country the whole idea is repugnant, and its method of enactment distinctly pharisaical; but then India is not a Christian country, and Europeans who live there are bound to respect the religious beliefs of the vast majority of the inhabitants. Had the British been an intolerant people it is safe to predict that India would no longer be part of the British Empire.



CHAPTER XV

Indian Transport—Human, Animal and Mechanical—Road Hogs and a Noah's Ark—Police and the Traffic Problem—Suitable Cars for India—The Closed *versus* the Open Car—Hints to Manufacturers

THE various systems of transport met with in India may be classified roughly as follows: human, animal, railway, tramway, motor and air. I have placed these systems in order of seniority, not necessarily of usefulness.

Human transport is still used to a very great extent; coolies do a great deal of carrying and lifting in all parts of India. They also pull the rickshaws and carry the *dandies* of Darjeeling and other hill stations, where their only serious rivals exist in the form of shanks' pony and those others of the four-footed variety. In some hill stations a few motor-cars are to be seen, but their orbit of usefulness is a small one. A motor-car may climb a mountain peak once in a way to provide material for an advertising stunt, but the feat is too expensive and dangerous to develop into an everyday pastime.

Carrying burdens on the head is still the method of portage most favoured by the Indian coolie. Those fellows who flock round and fall like hungry wolves upon your heaped-up luggage, when you arrive by train or steamer, will always lift suitcases and trunks to their heads and stagger away with the burden. And in the cities, when you buy or hire a piano, or have occasion to move your own from one house to another, the job is done by coolies, who carry the instrument on their heads. These men wear thick pads, on which the piano rests, and it takes about ten men to move one piano. You tremble for the safety of your precious "grand" as the fellows make off with it at a brisk walk,



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jerking their forearms, while their necks are held rigid, though eyes flash left and right as a direct and fearless progress is made through the busy traffic. They invariably reach their destination all right, incredible as this may sound ; and the piano is delivered safely, and placed wherever it is wanted.

This piano-moving is one of the sights which strikes a stranger as being most curious. It is really one of the few times when you will ever see an Indian move quickly at work. I used to wonder from where these piano-carriers were recruited, and finally came to the conclusion that they were a special breed of men, whose origin and village were known only to piano-makers and agents. The art must be handed down from one generation to another, for such proficiency and briskness is unknown in other spheres of Indian life.

Animal transport is very varied. Thus in Karachi you will find camels drawing carts—a really grotesque and unique sight. In other parts of India elephants do their share of transport. In some of the Native States the guns are drawn by elephants, and of course these sagacious creatures are used very greatly by hunters in the jungle. You will see them also in processions ; but do not expect one to be waiting outside your hotel to take you to see the sights of Bombay or Calcutta. In these cities you must go to the Zoological Gardens to see elephants.

Horses are used principally in the towns for drawing private carriages, *gharis* and office *jauns*. They are mostly poor, underfed creatures, and I for one shall not be sorry to see them entirely displaced by the motor-car. Neither the heat nor the surface of the streets of Indian cities is suited to horseflesh in these days of congested and swift traffic. The time when it was a pleasure to sit behind a pair of fast-trotting bays has gone, never to return. And in India, at all events, a sensitive passenger suffers only a little less than the sensitive horse between the shafts when swift-running motor-cars dive at and around him from every conceivable angle, and the animal



is jagged here and there, pulled up, and then lashed on, by the ragged fiend who sits in command of the reins.

The great bulk of Indian transport, from the purely commercial point of view, is undoubtedly the bullock-drawn cart. I have said a great deal about the conditions under which these animals work in the chapter on the treatment of dumb animals, and I shall leave it at that. Bullocks are mentioned now merely because everywhere you go in India there the patient animals are to be found, drawing carts of all sizes and descriptions. You will also find bullocks dragging the curious wooden ploughs which scratch up the soil of the countryside. In a few of the more up-to-date states the mechanical tractor is now being used to draw a multiple-furrow gang-plough, but this is quite exceptional.

The motor-car is winning its way in India at a very rapid rate. There are, of course, taxis in all the towns; and in many places more or less dilapidated motor-buses function between one out-station and another. In the cities these motor-buses (in Calcutta alone there are four hundred operating) are mostly of quite modern construction and are gradually forcing the tramways out of action. If these latter manage to survive it will be merely because of the pressure of traffic at certain times of the day being so great that any and every form of transport must be pressed into use, in order that the multitude of office and other city workers may get home. It is very much the same problem which has for some time confronted London, and in proportion it is no less acute; but there is this difference, that the London trams are fairly speedy and comfortable, whereas those in India are very slow and very uncomfortable. Moreover, they are single-deckers and usually run coupled in pairs. Frequently they jump the rails and block the road: the system of braking is so antiquated that the driver can never pull up quickly, and sometimes cannot stop his car in a hundred yards.

I had personal experience of this sort of thing more



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than once. The worst case was when coming out of police headquarters in Calcutta. In order to turn on to the road and cross to my proper side it was necessary to run at right angles across the tram-lines. The constable on duty stepped out and held up the traffic a moment to allow my car to get across the tram-lines. An approaching tram-car, although some considerable distance off, could not pull up, despite frantic efforts on the part of its driver. As for the moment my car was stuck broadside across the lines, awaiting a chance to turn into the stream of home-going traffic, I was powerless to move; several other cars were behind me, and a thick moving stream in front. So my car had the full benefit of the weight of the on-coming tram. Luckily only the side of my car was smashed. I believe the driver of the tram was prosecuted by the police for ignoring the signal to stop. The insurance company paid for the necessary repairs; but I never heard that the Tramways Company ever paid a penny as compensation. As usual they got away on some technicality, and I had to go without my car for a fortnight.

So you see I do not like trams, neither do other Europeans in India; they are usually patronized by Indians. I see that the Calcutta Tramways Company report a revenue for 1926 which shows a decrease of nearly eighty-seven thousand pounds on the takings of the previous year. A dividend of 5 per cent. has been declared as against one of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in 1925. The official reason for the decrease in traffic is stated in the Directors' Report to be due to "communal disturbances and the competition of independent omnibuses." As a means of inducing more people to use the trams the directors have reduced the fares, and in addition have issued season tickets. It all reads rather like conditions at home, does it not?

The fine service of motor-buses which are now operating on the streets of Calcutta have filled a long-felt want. Also they go where no trams went before and where none



can go now, and they go quickly and comfortably. If motor-buses are kept clean and in decent repair there must be a great future for this form of transport all over India.

Indians have taken to motor-cars like ducks to water. It is the ambition of the majority of Indians to own cars and run them gloriously to death as speedily as possible. The taxi has long ago come into its own. You find taxis everywhere; and most of them are in a disgraceful condition, both as regards their mechanism and upholstery. The taximeters too are not at all reliable, and there is more than a suspicion that drivers juggle with these meters for their own benefit. Prosecutions for this offence are fairly frequent, but still the merry game goes on. There is always a good chance of getting away with it.

Speed limits are imposed in most parts of India, following, in the main, British procedure, and the rule of the road is the same. Accidents, however, are of common occurrence. This is partly because of reckless driving, but almost as much because of the extreme stupidity of the lower-class Indians, who stroll about the road without observing any rule, having no sense of direction. They change their mind and turn off without any warning and without looking for on-coming traffic. The driver of a car has to be constantly swerving, or jamming on his brakes, in order to avoid running someone down.

Thousands of pedestrians are killed every year, and many more thousands deserve to be, for Indians who walk imagine that the middle of the road is their special province; the pavements are merely useful for dogs and bullocks, and constitute a handy place on which to deposit the skins of mangoes and bananas.

But when all this is said it must also be recorded that numbers of Indian drivers are reckless in the extreme. Usually it is themselves and their like whom they kill, for motor accidents generally involve two cars. Danger from side streets is often totally ignored; and especially at night-time reckless Indians may be seen, in any of the



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great towns, tearing along, two or three abreast, in their cars, and racing like the chariots of old in some amphitheatre. But these fellows do their racing on the main streets, and take the opportunity to "scorch" when they know that most of the police are off duty, and those who are supposed to be in attendance are probably having a quiet chat at some neighbouring *bustee*.

If the residents of India do not wish to have their motoring hedged round, even more than it is at present, with rigid and maybe inequitable legislation, it behoves them very seriously to discourage in every possible way the growing tendency to recklessness. The European of moderate means who owns a small car is rarely the offender. It is often his most precious possession: if it gets smashed possibly he will never be able to afford another one, and in the most favourable circumstances a smash means several weeks when he will be without a car. This is no joke in a hot country when you are used to riding everywhere in your own car. Hiring is costly, and, moreover, the owner-driver hates to be driven, especially by an Indian taxi-driver; it is much too risky.

It is those high-powered cars, owned generally by wealthy though scantily clad Indians, which constitute the chief danger of Indian towns. These fellows tear about at night, accompanied frequently by women of easy virtue, and goad on their drivers to go faster and faster, in a mad endeavour to prove their greatness to their fair passengers. Such hooligans are a menace to themselves and to every other user of the highway.

The decently behaved motorist finds traffic conditions all against him. Assuredly the man who can drive without mishap in Calcutta during the cold-weather season—round about Christmas—need have no fear of driving anywhere in the world. In no other city that I know of is so much wilful and unnecessary obstruction to be met with in the streets. Where else have you so many people with perfectly good eyes which they refuse to use? In what other country are cattle allowed to wander freely on the



roads, their own sweet will taking preference over that of human beings ? And where else are to be found such a number and variety of antediluvian vehicles moving at such widely varying speeds ? In the streets of Bombay and Calcutta you have the sacred bull ; he resembles the lilies of the field in his activities, but in no wise resembles them in appearance. Then there is the water-buffalo, who treads his heated and weary way, to the everlasting disgrace of all humanely minded people. The cow also is everywhere in evidence, and there she remains until too weak to congest the traffic any longer ; she then goes to the butcher to be made into what is the Indian equivalent of roast beef. The bullock likewise endures—until he, too, passes on to the sausage machine.

Then there is the wretched donkey, weighed down by a huge pile of “ washing.” He staggers under the burden, and often falls before the wheels of your car. I suppose he will continue to cumber the roads, for we must be clean, even if we cannot be merciful. The miserable *ghari* horses, of previous mention, also get in the way when least expected. And in addition there are dogs, cats, and sometimes even monkeys. A veritable Noah's Ark !

To this collection must be added the numerous cyclists who ride recklessly, to their own danger and that of all pedestrians. These fellows are for ever getting in the way of faster traffic, for they simply will not pull aside to allow cars to pass. No wonder they frequently go under.

It will be seen that the motorist must keep ceaselessly on the alert, with one foot on his clutch the whole time and one hand always ready to apply the hand-brake ; for in the emergencies which so often arise in Indian streets the foot-brake alone is rarely sufficient. He must also keep his teeth well filed, for fear of puncturing his heart, which at these critical moments rests all a-flutter in his mouth.

No wonder that insurance companies have raised their motor-rates all round, and will no longer insure taxis in any circumstances whatsoever.



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It will be realized that the traffic police have no easy job to control and regulate city traffic in India. Granted this difficulty, it nevertheless seems to me that the usual system adopted there is wrong, for, instead of trying to get rid quickly of a stream of traffic, the custom is to hold it up for a long time. In narrow streets this almost inevitably leads to a block of the entire street, for drivers get tired of waiting their turn and edge in on the off side, and then hopelessly block the way of on-coming traffic. Cars and *gharis* standing at the sides of the road make confusion worse confounded, and of course the constable on point duty, who is responsible for releasing the growing stream of cars and other vehicles, has little or no idea of what is going on behind him a quarter of a mile away.

These *parawallahs*, as the ordinary constables are called, have no idea of using their discretion, and are singularly lacking in intelligence and common sense. They are recruited from the villages mostly, and are drilled and given a fairly good grounding in discipline of a military nature. They give crashing salutes to their officers, even to their sergeants; but to the ordinary civilian, no matter what his position, they are rarely even polite. Some of the old school are good fellows right enough, but the youngsters are what is known as *jungle-wallahs*, who, until they came into town, had probably never seen a white man before. They have been taught to respect and obey their officers, but the rest of humanity consists of merely white and black material on which they can parade the authority which a police uniform entitles them to exercise. It is not altogether without reason that the police force is cordially hated in India; the jackanapes in office is always detested.

What matters will be like if complete Indianization of the police is ever brought about can readily be imagined. The corruption in the ranks which is now so freely alleged would then be everywhere apparent; snobbery would give place to jobbery, and nobody's life or property



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would be worth much unless a fixed monthly tribute was paid to both great and small police officials. The prospect is not an alluring one; and I think the peoples of India already know sufficient of the possibilities of bribery and corruption among themselves to be content with the devil they know rather than open the door wide to admit a devil whom they know not.

When this traffic problem of Indian cities is summed up dispassionately it cannot seriously be disputed that the traffic police on the whole grapple with a very difficult problem in a tolerably efficient manner. After all, they have much to put up with from all users of the road, and standing for long periods in the sun is not conducive to clear thinking or speedy action. Greater efficiency can be secured only by the permanent recruiting of more European personnel into the Indian Police Service. It is true of the police, no less than of the army, that the backbone of the service is the non-commissioned man. At present there are not sufficient white vertebræ to form a complete and really perfect spinal column.

To the average European dweller in an Indian town a motor-car is practically a necessity. Newcomers quickly become disillusioned about the desirability of walking in the heat of the day. This may be all right just round the shops and offices, but to walk long distances in the heat unnecessarily is putting a strain on your health which is foolish, for all your energies are wanted in other directions. You cannot do your work properly if you arrive at the office in an exhausted and moist condition. Moreover, white clothes soon soil; and to appear damp and bedraggled first thing in the morning is not likely to lead to quick promotion. Walking should be done before breakfast, when, clad in shorts and a tennis shirt, you can take all the exercise you will want until the sun begins to weaken.

I have told you about the trams. We will count them out, for usually they will take you only part of the way



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on your journey to the office, and if you can afford to patronize a more expensive form of transport be sure the fact will be registered in your favour in the books of your *burra sahib*, and, what is perhaps even more important, in the books of his wife, the *burra mem*. These *mem-sahibs* frequently have been the cause of the advancement or displacement of young mercantile assistants who are in the service of a great man's firm.

So this journey to the office each day, and the return home, must be by public taxi or private car. For the moment I am ruling out the motor-buses, which are a quite recent innovation. Fellows who live together in a chummery frequently share the expense of a taxi. This answers very well if they all get up at more or less the same time and the chummery remains for a long time harmonious. But sooner or later the chummery breaks up. You are glad to be living alone in the early mornings; man becomes more gregarious towards nightfall.

You decide to purchase a car. Well and good. But what sort of a car? To begin with, it is best to understand from the outset that your car will be used mainly for town work. The roads in the towns are excellent, and if you cannot go very far afield you can travel very well. Once outside the town, however, you usually come across the most pestilential tracks, which are glorified by the names of roads; and as they mostly lead to nowhere in particular, it is not long before you turn back and confine your joy-rides to within a few miles of where you live. India is not like England in many ways; it is totally unlike England as regards motoring. There are no Brightons to run down to, no Folkestones and no Clactons and Mablethorpes to which you can travel by car for the week-end. You can, for all practical purposes, count touring out of your motoring sphere of activities. What you want is a car which will take you to the office and back, will take you to the races, to the Lodge, to the theatre and other functions, and generally



be unto you what a good pair of legs is in the English provincial town, or what the Tube railways are to the Londoner.

Then you must consider weather. It is very hard on a car to be scorched for many months and then drenched for nearly as many more. After experimenting with three varieties of cars I came to the conclusion that the closed car was the most suitable for all weather conditions in India. True, you miss the joy of the open car in the evening; but at night, when dressed for dinner or the theatre, a closed car is to my mind infinitely preferable, while in the heat of the day a splendid breeze is obtainable through the wind-screen and open windows all the time you are moving. It is only when stationary that it becomes a bit warm.

Even the most rabid advocate of the open car will agree that during the Indian monsoon a closed car is ideal. Rain comes on very suddenly, and frequently leaves off just as quickly as it started. With your open car you must fish about under seats to try to find the side-screens. Then they must be sorted out and placed in position—frequently a lengthy process, in the course of which both you and your passengers, if you have any, will become more or less soaked by the driving rain. However, you are finally closed in, and drive away. The celluloid of the side-screens is discoloured, and most likely badly scratched in addition, so that it is impossible to see out to right or left. But you manage in some way to turn to right and left and avoid collisions. Then the rain ceases, and somebody remarks on the heat. You must now stop and take the side-screens down. They are wet, but must nevertheless be stowed away somehow. More trouble, more broken and cracked celluloid; probably some bad language.

How about the closed-in car? When the rain starts you wind or pull up the windows, and when it ceases you let them down. The glass is clear, and can be kept clear if rubbed now and then with paraffin, and you can always



leave a window a little way open to secure adequate ventilation. That is all you have to do.

I think we may leave it at that ; but if you wish, try it for yourself and find out, as I did.

Whatever make of car you purchase see that it is adequately shod with large tyres ; if of the ordinary type, see they are oversize. The heat of India plays havoc with rubber, and your tyre bill will prove your greatest expense in motoring. Oversize tyres kept well inflated make for the most economy—especially in India.

Then my advice is to go in for a car which is more or less built on standard lines year after year. Those makers who are for ever changing their types of mudguards, radiators and what not are a source of great annoyance to motorists who have purchased one of their cars. Dealers are only human, and even a motor-dealer's bank account has its limitations. How can he possibly stock all the different sizes of all the various component parts which have gone to make up the many models of motor-cars placed on the market as annual new model for the past six years ? Yet that is what only too often is expected of him. It simply cannot be done, and the consequence is that a 1927 type of mudguard must be fitted somehow on to a 1925 model car. The result is not generally satisfactory, and it is often the same with other parts of the body or chassis. There is no need to labour the point ; any experienced motorist will realize what I am driving at, and those who are not motorists can ask a friend who is. He will tell you quickly enough.

Before I forget it, let me impress on you who will motor in India to fit bumpers, good, flat, and of the double variety, to your car, both back and front. They will save you numbers of dented and broken mudguards ; also I believe now most insurance companies allow a rebate on the premiums payable in all cases of cars where bumpers are fitted.

Wood is apt to shrink and rot in the extremes of heat and wet. That is why I prefer the wheels of a motor-car



to be made of pressed steel rather than American hickory. As to "bicycle" wheels, they are difficult to keep really clean, and have a tendency to rust the inner tube, when in time the moisture penetrates to the tyre via a loosened spoke or two.

Watch your spare wheel. Do more than watch it; lock it. Put a stout chain and a reliable padlock to secure it to the frame of the car at the rear. If you neglect this precaution it will assuredly be stolen at some time or another. These Indian motor thieves are smart fellows, and the articles stolen are never recovered by the police, no matter how many forms you fill up or how brightly the Indian sub-inspector's buttons shine when you waste valuable time going to the right *thana* (police station) to make a complaint.

There is no good to be gained by blinking the fact that most of the cars sold in India emanate from America. For this there are several reasons, chief amongst which is the initial outlay. Secondly comes the question of the ease with which spare parts can be obtained, and their low cost as compared with the prices charged for the spare parts of English cars. These objections are not now so strong as they used to be, for a few English firms have realized the huge market which awaits a good car at a moderate price, and are making a genuine attempt to secure their share of the trade. To compete with the American car, however, the cost of a British car should not exceed two hundred pounds, delivered to the customer in India. A good water-cooling system is necessary, which means a large radiator, and the difference between the two-three seater and the family four should not be too great. And plenty of leg-room is wanted in a country where your foot is for ever resting just on or above the clutch; it is not pleasant to have your knee almost touching the steering-wheel when resting in this position.

Another thing manufacturers might bear in mind is that in cities like Calcutta head-lights are forbidden



within the city limits. Small side-lights only must be used ; and in many cars, both English and American, these lamps have to be fitted as extras after the car has been sold to the customer in India. In all cases a bulb horn as well as an electric one should be standard ; some police authorities prohibit any horns other than bulb, but outside their jurisdiction you want both.

Good hoods are needed ; most of the standard variety quickly crack, and afterwards leak in the heavy rains. And, again because of the monsoon, the higher up the magneto and carburettor are placed the better. All cars for the East should be fitted with a really large and efficient filter for the petrol, before it comes near the carburettor, and the connexions of the latter should be made as accessible as possible, and the nuts and threads large and strong. Most stoppages out East are caused by choked petrol pipes or jets, and anyone who has had to dismantle these things beneath a fierce sun, and with the thermometer standing at 100° in the shade, and heaven alone knows how much on your back, will bear me out when I say that the average pipe connexions are awkward to get off and much worse to replace. And as for the jets, they are not a pleasant job to undertake on the roadside at the best of times.

Punctures and troubles generally usually seem to occur in an Indian city when you are on the way to dinner or the theatre, or hurrying down late for office in the morning, or at noon when you are racing home to tiffin. You see they are always occurring ; and it is mostly because of dirty petrol that your engine fails. This, together with punctures and bursts, caused by the cast shoes of bullocks and careless inflation of tyres, constitute the reason for 90 per cent. of your motoring troubles.

The sets of tools supplied with many motor-cars are usually most inadequate. This is bad enough in England, but perfectly tragic in India ; for tools are not easy to acquire everywhere, and when they are their cost is very high. Will manufacturers please note this ?



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A decent "jack," with a large base, is necessary in a country where the tarred roads sink beneath the tread of your boots, let alone the weight of your car. And if the "jack" is one which can be elevated quickly, by means of a chain, so much the better, for the usual gift variety of "jack" is a trial and a general abomination.

Many self-starters on cars in the East fail to function after a time. Having eliminated all usual troubles, such as the omission to put a sufficiency of distilled water in the accumulator, dirty connexions, and so on, we finally come to the generator itself. All too frequently it is found that the armature winding is insufficiently protected against damp, and one firm I knew finally made it a point of removing the armature from every battery generator and stoving it thoroughly, then waterproofing it again before assembling the dynamo once more.

The springs for cars in the East should all be covered, as is the case in many good makes of car, for and dirt play havoc with steel in India. Of course there are other things also, such as the extreme necessity for particularly well-seasoned wood to be used in all coachwork, more especially in the body of a closed car. Doors usually swell in the rains, and have to be planed in order to make them shut. Then when the atmosphere is dry again these doors are loose, and rattle.

All these improvements, you will say, in a two-hundred-pound car! Well, perhaps not all of them, but as many as possible. And plenty of motorists would not mind paying a good deal more than two hundred pounds if they could be sure of getting a car such as I have described, partially and inadequately I will admit, but nevertheless with a good deal of experience behind my complaints and suggestions. I must leave other transport questions for the next chapter. You will probably agree that the motor-car has had already more than its fair share of consideration.



CHAPTER XVI

Train Journeys—Wayside Stations by Night—Joy-Riders—Dropping Cards—"Not at Home"—Garden-Parties and their Uses

THE Indian loves to travel, especially by train, within the confines of his own country. To go anywhere by sea is a different matter altogether, not lightly to be undertaken. He calls the sea the "black water," and to journey on it means that his caste is broken. This causes trouble; and when he returns to India the orthodox Hindu who wishes to regain his caste must go through certain forms and ceremonies, and pay quite a lot of money, in order to be pure again.

It is not only the poor and illiterate Indian who holds these beliefs; on the contrary, some of those who hold most closely to what we Westerners look upon as silly superstition are themselves the most highly educated and progressive of men. The late Sir Austosh Mukerji, a judge of the Calcutta High Court, and the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University for many years, was an example of the class of Indian who, with every opportunity to travel, and with necessary means, as well as a knowledge of a warm welcome awaiting him in England, would never break his caste by making the necessary sea-journey. He was a most fearless man, an educationist of distinction, and the "Father" of his university. In a tussle with the Governor of Bengal over certain questions regarding the Calcutta University it was generally conceded that Sir Austosh had the better of the encounter. There was nothing servile in his dealing with men, and in many ways he was the most modern of the moderns. But as regards religion he remained a strictly orthodox Hindu. He was born, educated, won distinction, and finally died, universally mourned, in the land he loved so well. He never left its shores.



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Train journeys in India are rather different to those in England ; they are usually much longer, and always much more dirty. A glance at the map of India will show you why their length is greater, while the absence of cleanliness is due most of all to the very inferior coal used for stoking the locomotives. This is such filthy stuff that the whole compartment becomes covered with soot and coal dust, and every now and again when the train stops at a station it is necessary for a sweeper to appear with brush and dust-pan to clean up the carriage.

As most train journeys undertaken by Europeans involve spending one or more nights on board, it is necessary to carry your own bedding and washing-kit with you. If you do not you must sleep in your clothes, for there is no provision made for you in the way of sheets, pillows, etc., and neither threats nor money can procure them once you are on the train. Corridor trains are not fashionable in India on most of the lines. You will always find a refreshment-car on long-distance trains, but you must take an opportunity of reaching it from the platform of a handy station, and you will have to remain in the dining-car until another station is reached which affords an opportunity for a return to your own compartment.

People usually take their own servant with them ; he has a third-class ticket and ensconces himself as near to your compartment as possible, or there may even be a carriage for servants which adjoins your own. When you leave the train for a meal, either at a station refreshment-room or in the dining-car itself, it is well to put your servant in charge of your personal effects in the compartment. Train thieves are fairly common, and to leave your bags and sleeping things lying unattended is simply asking for trouble, for as likely as not you will have the carriage to yourself, if it is a small one, or if some other European is with you it is very likely he will want to get out the same time as you do.

Some people can sleep through anything. An Indian train journey provides an excellent means of discovering



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whether or not you belong to the elect. The usual permanent way of the Indian railway is not as perfect as you are accustomed to in England, and the shaking and noise are fairly considerable. But it is not between stations that you are most disturbed ; it is at the stations themselves.

The arrival of a train at a wayside station is an event of sufficient magnitude to bring the entire population of the place out to greet it. Especially is this so at night. The day's work being over, a little recreation is indicated, and here is cheap fun ready to hand. Even if the Indian has no particular friend who is travelling by train he will nevertheless come along and help to congest the platform, and by his presence add to the general tumult and confusion.

The station may be lit up dimly, or not at all. That matters not, for every party of Indians will carry a *buttie*, which is a kerosene lamp of sorts—usually a cheap one of the hurricane variety. If you are awake—and only the really seasoned traveller can be expected to sleep through the din—and let down your window to see where you are, you will find the platform swarming with half-naked brown bodies swaying this way and that, waving lamps and gesticulating wildly. All the time they chatter and scream at one another—a veritable babel of sound. Every passenger is surrounded by friends and all the travellers have luggage.

It would seem in some cases as though the entire contents of a house were accompanying its owner. All kinds of domestic pots and pans, bedclothes, boxes, water-carriers, trestle-beds, here and there a caged bird twittering in fright at the light, and general pandemonium ; while little children are dragged by the arm, first here and then there, and tiny babies are supported on the hips of young girls, who are their mothers, but who appear mere children themselves. These will be young peasant women mostly, and they struggle about in pathetic confusion, encumbered in many cases by their *purdah* veils.



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All you can see of them is the glint of bright eyes through the slots in the black wrapping.

It is small wonder that trains stop a long while at wayside Indian stations. A great number of these people must find room somewhere in the train, and they hurl themselves at carriages already filled to overflowing with warm and moist humanity. They are practically all third-class passengers, though some may travel second. A goodly proportion will have tickets, some travellers most certainly will not, and many get a ride without payment. At their destination these people are adepts at slipping past the ticket collectors, and the amount of revenue lost to Indian railways by this "joy-riding" must be very great. In recent years matters have been tightened up a good deal, and additional staff employed to handle the ever-increasing crowds.

I recollect on one occasion when a suburban train reached Howrah station—which is the Liverpool Street of Calcutta—that over one hundred passengers were detained, and charged with travelling without having previously paid their fares. These people were most indignant when they had to appear in court and pay for their temerity; all sorts of people were caught in the net so unexpectedly laid that morning, and the number of lawyers was quite alarming to those of the laity who still retained some respect for the legal profession. In India, no less than in other parts of the world, railways share with insurance companies and the income-tax collector the penalty of being considered everybody's legitimate prey. Thou shalt not steal—except from a railway company, an insurance company or the Revenue Department. And most of us in our hearts readily agree to this amendment to the Eighth Commandment.

When the train finally pulls out, with many creaks and groans, and slipping of wheels, you may settle down on your improvised bed once more, with the certain knowledge that in a short space of time the next stopping place will be reached, and another entertainment



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provided to while away the hot hours of a seemingly endless night.

It is quite possible that you may come into even closer contact with the disturbance. Like a careful traveller you have bolted your carriage door and feel more or less free from invasion. Then, as you lie listening in a semi-conscious condition, the offside window drops down and an arm belonging to some railway servant is thrust through the open window. Before you can remonstrate he has undone the bolt and is in the carriage. The other door is undone, and you sit up angrily to find another European entering the carriage.

"Awfully sorry, old man, to disturb you, but there is no room elsewhere. My wife and I must get in, as we have to catch the Mail at Bombay."

You rise hurriedly and make the necessary readjustments. There will be no more sleep for you that night.

It turns out that the intruder is a local police officer. As befits his importance, he is attended at the station by all of the local force who are not on duty. Round his neck, and that of his *mem-sahib*, are hung garlands of sweet-smelling flowers. The lady gets in looking tired and worn, too tired luckily to bother about your dishevelled state, or even, perchance, to notice you at all. The man remains on the platform until the moment the train leaves. He has to listen to many speeches and prayers; meanwhile, whether he likes it or not, numerous gifts of strong-smelling flowers and overripe fruit are thrust into the compartment. By now the carriage looks like a sort of harvest festival; you and your belongings are completely smothered with the fruits of the earth. They are all there—all, that is to say, with the possible exception of those gigantic marrows; but then they are always at a discount except at the jam-making season.

You inwardly rejoice when the train begins to move. Amid crashing salutes from the police on the platform the departing officer falls back amongst the vegetables, and sits down uncertainly on a bag of ripe mangoes.



You all smile feebly, and the garlanded pair remove their signs of greatness, pitch most of the fruit out of the window, and find a seat somewhere.

They are already feeling better, and presently you forget your temporary annoyance, for they are pleasant people who are off to enjoy a well-earned leave. Soon they will be in London, and become just simple citizens again. It grows rather wearisome, this mothering and fathering of our Aryan brothers. How nice to become your own plain self once more, even if it can last only a few months.

These railway journeys of India may appeal to some people, but, personally, I like them not. I sometimes wish that all my journeys could be by sea. Ocean travel is so much more comfortable, especially in the East.

As you drive round the residential European quarter of any Indian town you are certain to see, if it be late afternoon, that many houses have a little wooden box hung at the entrance. It is rather like the offertory-box in a church porch, except that on its side will be inscribed a married lady's name, and the magic words: "Not at Home."

You may at first imagine this to be an indication of the pure-bloodedness of the owner of the box, a sign that the occupier of the house is a *pucca* European—for assuredly no European can be said to be genuinely at home in India!

In reality the box means nothing of the sort. The lady is probably playing tennis on the lawn behind the house, or playing bridge on the verandah. Nevertheless, when this magic box is hung up, only really intimate friends may enter. To you and all the rest of those outside her innermost circle of friends she is "not at home." But she must not be entirely neglected; you are expected to "drop cards" if you wish to be friendly. And if you are a newcomer you will be well advised to do so, not altogether



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without discrimination, neither with a niggardly hand, but drop some you must, or you will never come to know anybody—at least, that was so in the old days, and to some extent it remains true to this day.

If you and your wife come to India, and take a bungalow in some important town, you may be certain that no friendly neighbour will drop in to see how you like the place and offer a kindly word of welcome. Such things are simply not done in India. It is the part of the newcomer to call first. This you do by the card system; nobody wants to see you until they have first inspected your cards, and made a few discreet inquiries. Then you may get cards dropped in your own little box, or they may come by post. A call may follow; perhaps even an invitation to tennis or dinner; it depends a good deal on the status of your firm, your relations at home, your titles, and your bank account—also the street in which you live matters quite a lot.

It is very wrong to make fun of all this; because dropping cards has its advantages—though I have a shrewd suspicion that the association of master printers instituted the idea. If there is such an organization, that phrase should really be in capital letters, for they must be an important group. Assuredly it is the printer who gets most out of this card game, for the demand is immense; and we should also be thankful because, were it not for cards, the art of copperplate writing would have died out long ago.

Strange as it may sound, the people who really matter will have none of your cards. When you call at Government House, as indeed every European resident must once a season, there you will find a great book placed in a select spot, to which you may easily walk from your car. A large printed notice invites you to write your name and address in the book, and particularly enjoins on you *not* to leave cards.

Truly an excellent idea, and one which is really productive of something, for if you are anybody at all, or



the nearest possible equivalent, you will most certainly get an invitation to a garden-party. That is, at all events, something, and much more than you are likely to get from most of your card-dropping.

In olden days it was customary for the young men to don frock-coats and silk hats every Sunday morning, and to hire a carriage and drive round the town solemnly dropping cards. Nowadays they drive to a friend's house, clad in a tennis shirt and a pair of shorts, and comfortably tucked away in a two-seater, or astride a motor-bike, and drop nothing at all. Indeed they usually pick something up instead, not infrequently a bottle of beer. It may not be so romantic but it is much more pleasant.

Garden-parties are one of the few remaining institutions which are still healthy, and likely to endure for many years to come. They are an easy and fairly inexpensive way of showing hospitality, and are quite popular in India: official and unofficial people give them. The Governor of a province will thus welcome you to the grounds of Government House once or twice every cold weather. Some of the Indian princes who have a town house will also give a garden-party in honour of the Governor, or maybe of the Viceroy himself. Then there are lots of smaller fry who give a party, either in the afternoon or evening. For some reason or other they wish to gather a crowd together: someone is going on leave or has just returned; his friends or subordinates wish to speed his going or welcome him back, so the occasion is made the excuse for some speechmaking, a good deal of garlanding, and the purchasing of cheap cigarettes and doubtful cigars. And, should the affair take place in the evening, for once in a way Australian champagne comes into its own.

Almost everybody goes to the Governor's garden-party. At all events, it is nice to say you have been, and it gives your wife a chance of saying she has nothing to wear. That, of course, means a fat cheque. Then on arrival you all stand about the grounds, clad in the



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modern equivalent of purple and fine linen, and feeling rather foolish though trying to appear as if you were having no end of a fine time.

The Governor, poor fellow, is more bored than anybody else, but he dare not acknowledge the fact—it takes somebody like the Prince of Wales to do that. When in India H.R.H. retired from these entertainments as soon as he decently could, and wanted to know what time the dancing started. But then, of course, the heir to the Throne is privileged.

These official garden-parties at all events give you an opportunity of seeing over the grounds of Government House. The mysteries of what lies beyond the sentries, and within the great surrounding belt of trees with their white railings, are for an afternoon laid bare.

You can sit under the great trees in comfortable basket-chairs, and wander beside lily ponds and artificial lakes; you may even catch a glimpse of some of the staff playing tennis. That, however, is rare, for most of the staff have something to do at these parties. It is their duty to go round from group to group of guests, and see that everybody, especially those of the ladies who are good-looking, is having a good time: and very splendid they look, too, in their gay uniforms. Some military men like the life of an A.D.C., while others prefer soldiering.

All kinds of people are to be seen at the garden-party. There are men in grey "toppers" and morning coats, just a few nowadays, for the ordinary lounge suit seems to have taken the place of almost every other form of dress for men. I recollect, once, three men turning up in a bunch all wearing silk hats and frock-coats. They were just out from London on a visit to India, and had been told to bring this kit along especially for garden-parties. The sight was so unusual that an operator from a firm of local cinematographers turned his machine on the embarrassed trio, and secured a picture which was quite unique in its way. I believe this was the only



occasion that the costume was ever worn in the country by those visitors.

Tables are dotted all over the beautiful green lawn, and numerous bright umbrellas of giant size cast a grateful shade over sugar cakes and save them from melting. The Governor's band plays softly; fair ladies criticize one another's frocks, and mere man stands by as patient as may be under the strain. Groups of the worldly-wise hover as close to the tea-tables as they dare. You quickly discover why, for as soon as the Governor appears on the scene, standing motionless at the playing of the National Anthem, then bowing to left and right as he walks down the red carpet between rows of guests to the special tent prepared for him and his entourage, the hungry and expectant multitude are all aquiver. No sooner has "His Ex" entered the tent, sometimes even before, than there is an undignified rush for the tea-tables. Those people who are left out in this game of musical chairs repair to the refreshment-bar, and are served with tea and cakes as they stand. Or they can go a bit farther on, and discover another bar where other and stronger refreshment is usually provided.

Tea being over, people stand round and chat. They criticize the catering, those who are older are heard telling the younger generation how well Lord So-and-so used to do things. To hear them talk you might suppose these gossips had been there—more probably they were thriving on Mellin's Food at the time.

Almost every other person you speak to says how boring the whole affair is, how they had not intended to come but—you know how one simply must do these things. You smile, and possibly agree verbally, but your thought is: "What would the old thing have said if she had not been asked?"

No one can leave until His Excellency withdraws, and when he does, there is a stampede for cars. The guests go home to tell those of their friends who did not receive an invitation how wonderful it all was, how sweet Her



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Ladyship looked ; what a perfect fright Mrs So-and-so was with her green dress and dyed hair. "Cats," says the long-suffering husband, as he goes off to the club for a drink and a game of snooker. And, strangely enough, no one there even mentions the garden-party.

What then, you will ask me, is the use of it all ? I have often wondered myself, and have come to the conclusion that garden-parties are given principally for the sake of the Indian guests. It gives them an opportunity of meeting, socially, Government officials and prominent citizens. It gives the European non-official a chance of meeting the Indian official and the Indian non-official. He finds out in conversation that the rabid Swarajist is not such an inhuman monster as the newspapers would make him out to be. The Indian extremist, on the other hand, discovers that the European is after all a good fellow, and can crack a joke and unbend in quite a human manner. Both find they have a good deal in common, and the impression will remain through the fire and smoke of later debates and newspaper correspondence.

Also, the party gives the Governor an opportunity to pay some little attention to a few of the wobblers—those politicians who are easily influenced by a little judicial flattery, even a little genuine courtesy and kindness. It is not so easy to revile a Governor whose hand you have shaken, and into whose humorous and kindly eyes you have gazed. And Her Ladyship can do a great deal also in this way to smooth the path which her husband must tread. It is not in these days a flowery pathway, and if garden-parties do anything in the way of cementing friendship between official and unofficial residents of India, between white man and brown, long may they flourish—the sarcasm, scorn and scepticism of the average European notwithstanding.



CHAPTER XVII

The Indian Christmas—Followers of Paget, M.P.—Flying Visitors
—The Law of Divorce—Police Courts—Indian Broadcasting
—A Son of Charles Dickens

IN those parts of India where you get cold weather for several months, at the close of one year and at the beginning of the next, this season is very pleasant. Christmas is, in fact, a cheery time wherever you may be in the East, for it is the spirit of the festival which makes it joyous more than the weather with which English tradition has enwrapped it. I suppose it hardly ever occurs to an Englishman that Christmas had its origin in a hot country. As such is nevertheless a fact, what hinders those resident in the East from having a real old-fashioned Christmas! Nothing at all, I can assure you, having spent several exceptionally happy Christmases there.

Unless you are away up north, in some hill station, such as Simla, Missoorie or Darjeeling, you neither expect nor see snow or ice; but then, praises be! you do not have rain either. The average man spends his Christmas in the Plains; in one of the cities for preference, where everything is Christmassy save cold and snow. It is usually cold enough at night for a blanket and for a warm coat if you are motoring, but in the daytime you will still want your white suit and *topi*.

Shops are gay with Christmas cheer; there is usually a pantomime, starting in traditional style on Boxing Day, and all the hotels give special dinners and decorate their premises with evergreens and mistletoe, imported especially for the occasion if none can be brought down from the Hills. There are, in fact, almost too many attractions around Christmas for the ordinary person to participate in them all. You can dance every night in the week, with the exception of Sunday; there are tea-dances also and



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a special number of race meetings, not to mention polo matches, when up-country teams visit the cities and participate in tournaments on the *maidan*. There are football matches to see, and always tennis to be played, and everything is done in the most pleasant circumstances possible. Of course in Bombay you do not get really cold weather at any time of the year, but in Calcutta you have three good months of it, and the place then is always crowded with visitors. And so it is in many other parts of the country.

Carol singers come round to the hotels. The Salvation Army are particularly enterprising in this matter, and collect a goodly sum from the guests, who give generously, for they like to hear the old carols well sung—it adds a spice of old-world Christmas to their dinner.

Tiffin on Christmas Day is also a cheery meal. A long, specially erected table at the top of the great dining-room groans beneath the weight of good things, including the traditional boar's head; crackers are passed round, and nobody on this occasion is ashamed to appear ridiculous in a paper cap. The band plays a Christmas medley of airs, to the constant accompaniment of the sound of corks popping and wine gurgling.

A great many people who never think of attending church service in the ordinary way have been to the Cathedral that morning. Indeed it is difficult to obtain a seat at a Christmas service; chairs are requisitioned and every available foot of standing room is occupied, while the Governor's band is specially lent for the occasion to add its music to that of the organ and choir.

At an early hour on Christmas morning you are made conscious of the auspicious day, for a whole procession of Indians is quite likely to arrive at your bungalow. It is an occasion known to them as the sahib's *Burra Din* (Great Day), and this means that your clerks, and others who are personal servants, and the messengers of various tradespeople, will all be waiting to salaam you, and hand in trays laden with flowers and fruits, indigestible sweets,



nuts, and even, maybe, samples of wines of which you have never even heard, and tins of cigarettes of a brand which you would never be guilty of smoking.

All these are presents, and if you are a newcomer you may feel quite overjoyed, you are certainly touched by the kindly thought. And you will be touched in another way also, for every man who brings a rupee's worth of fruit expects a handsome tip. Is not it the *sahib's* great day, and is it not the custom to give presents on that day? Assuredly it is, and you pay up as generously as your pocket will allow; but most of the fruit, sweets and other things, including the doubtful wine and cheap cigarettes, go to your bearer and other house-servants. These enterprising fellows either consume them or, as likely as not, sell them to some other Indian, who will take them round to another *sahib*, one who is not in the habit of getting up as early as you are. And he in his turn will likewise make a present, for with him, also, it is Christmas Day.

Your servants will, of course, expect money as well as second-hand presents, so by the time you get away from the house you are relieved of a goodly sum. It is a cheerful system of legalized blackmail, to which every European must subscribe; but it has its humorous side.

Children have just as good a Christmas out East as they usually would have in England. There are special parties at the hotels for them, and the traditional stocking hangs in the accustomed place at the foot of the bed. The child has but to lift up the mosquito curtain to retrieve it in the morning; that net, and the fact that there is daylight so much earlier in the morning than would be the case in England, are really the only differences the East makes to the child's Christmas. The toys and the boxes of sweets are the same, possibly they even come from the same manufacturer; and you can get the child a Christmas tree, and lots of pretty ornaments to put on it, considerably cheaper than you can at home. Indians rather specialize in these childish things, and can



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make all sorts of wonderful toys for children out of paper, and wood, and plaster. Indians are very fond of children, and fall readily into the fun of a children's Christmas.

What you do not, of course, get in India are the family dinners and reunions, which are such a feature of Christmas at home. If this is in some ways to be regretted, in other ways it is compensated for by the fact that, whereas at home the festivities press rather heavily on ladies of the household, here in the East all the work is done by your multitude of servants. You merely have to eat the dinner; the worry of preparation, the week's shopping in advance, the actual labour of the whole business—all this is taken out of your hands. So, after all, you see, Christmas week in the East is not such a bad time as folks in England might imagine. It is hateful to smash a cherished delusion, but we people out East do really have quite a jolly time at the festive season, and I don't believe it costs any more than it does in England.

It is in the cold weather that most casual visitors come to India; they have a right royal time and frequently express mild wonderment if they glimpse a few pasty faces, and marvel at the frayed nerves of some of the European inhabitants. Even in these days there are a good many descendants of Kipling's Paget, M.P., roaming about the world, but the trouble is that they rarely stay sufficiently long in India to be able to recognize themselves as belonging to the stock of so notorious an ancestor.

I well remember meeting one of this kind, but unfortunately for him he landed in the country just when the weather was beginning to warm up. He had miscalculated matters somewhat; but that did not seem to worry him, for he sat in the hotel drinking double whiskies, and laughed at our small portions of whisky and plentiful rations of soda. But he learnt all about it in time, and when I saw him off a few months later he was a pretty sick man, and the doctor had warned him that if he didn't leave then he would probably never get



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away at all. That sort of man will never be told anything; he is a distinct type, and such come and go with unfailing regularity.

There are other kinds of visitors to India. I call them flying visitors—of two kinds. First of all there are those who come by aeroplane and make a short stay at Karachi, Delhi, and elsewhere, and thence fly on to Calcutta where they stay a day or two before proceeding to Burma. They are, for the most part, gallant, cheery souls, and the townspeople come out in their thousands to welcome them on arrival, and give them no end of a good time for the short while they remain in the place. They are wine and dined, interviewed and photographed, and generally made much of by Press and public.

The other type of flying visitor comes stealthily, from no one exactly knows where, and he disappears almost as quietly—sometimes even more so. He may stay a month or a year, but when he finally disappears he takes a good deal of other people's property with him: sometimes it is cash, more often it is jewellery. The tradesmen of India have lost a lot of money over this type of visitor, for it rarely pays to prosecute, and if the police will not do so, few private individuals care to take the risk of running up a stiff bill of costs which will have to be paid by themselves, whether the prosecution be successful or not.

Running a successful "school" of *chemin de fer* has more than once provided travelling adventurers with a nourishing sum of money with which to leave India. Usually the small party arrives at a good hotel and makes friends with the habitual frequenters of the place. One of the gang is generally an attractive woman, and her part is to entice men to the handsome furnished flat which these people contrive to rent in a good-class district of the town. Plenty of drinks and eatables are provided free, and soon a "school" is formed; others are drawn into the net, and night by night large sums of money are lost to the professional gamblers. Finally the police get



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wind of the thing, and the visitors either clear out of the country at the first warning of trouble or, if they are inclined to remain, they are told officially to leave.

This departure, however, does not come about before a number of the local sporting fraternity have been well bled, and although the thing has happened many times in the past it will probably continue to happen as long as there are wealthy young fools to squander the fortunes built up for them by hard-working fathers. All of the victims, however, are not young men. There's no fool like an old fool, and some of the brand you meet with in India are particularly foolish where a young and pretty woman is concerned. People who imagine that the successful practising of the confidence trick is confined to Europe and America, and act accordingly when they come East, are likely to suffer a rude awakening.

Talking about swindling very naturally leads one's thoughts to the law courts. The Indian variety is very different from those in England. The Indian penal code also is different from the law of England, and there is one section of the Indian law which will especially interest married men. If your wife becomes enamoured of another man you can, if she goes off and lives with him, divorce her under the English law, and possibly obtain damages against the co-respondent, though whether the money is ever paid in full is always problematical.

Under the Indian penal code an injured husband can also do this; he can do more, for in India the man who entices away another's wife can be sent to prison. This law is by no means a dead letter, for I can recall several cases where a European co-respondent went to jail, at the instance of a husband who had proved successfully that the man had "alienated his wife's affections."

I understand that this law dates back to the days of John Company, when a trip from England to India was no light or inexpensive undertaking. In those days white women were very few and far between in the country.



It cost a husband quite a lot of money to bring his wife out from home ; she was thus much more of a rarity, and it may be assumed wives were looked upon as treasured possessions in those far-off days.

Evidently the law of supply and demand regulated values in the matrimonial as well as in the business market, and this statute, prescribing the penalties to be suffered by any man who was sufficiently daring successfully to lure a man's wife away from him, was evidently intended to put a stop to a state of things which had become too common. The fact that this law still remains on the Statute Book goes to show the high value which is to this day placed on a white woman in India, also that the gentle art of philandering is by no means a lost one. Wives still leave their husbands, or their affections are "alienated" by the oft-repeated pleadings of some gay Lothario, but the Indian penal code at all events provides penalties sufficiently stringent to make lovers look twice, or even thrice, before they leap.

I am not going to say anything about the High Courts of Justice in India, for they are not sufficiently dissimilar to those in England to call for lengthy comment. The police courts, however, are very different, especially those courts presided over by Honorary Indian Magistrates.

Even in the police courts of rural England there is a solemnity and decorum observed which in India is totally lacking. The police court of a large Indian city is usually a two- or three-storey building and its precincts are made the meeting-place for all sorts and conditions of people. There are pleaders by the score, who button-hole every likely-looking individual who comes into the compound in the hope that they may be engaged to appear in a case which is down for hearing that day. There are defendants, witnesses, and friends of both standing around, while prisoners are led through the throng roped to policemen in case they should try to slip away in the crush. Close by are the refreshment-



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stalls, where *pan* and lemonade are sold to satisfy the creature comforts of the crowd.

Inside and outside the building the babel of tongues is appalling, and as the various courts are situated both on the ground floor and upstairs, the din from one court penetrates into another, until the whole building is one gigantic chatterbox. The staircase gives a fine point of vantage for idlers who wish to overlook the proceedings of a court below, and half-naked perspiring bodies are seen glued to the railings while their owners' heads are pressed forward in an endeavour to understand, from out the babel of sound which comes up from below, just what is happening in the way of justice to-day.

The court below is packed to suffocation, and the smell of humanity comes up in strong overpowering waves. Horrible places these police courts—the modern Black Holes of Calcutta.

It is considered by an Indian a great honour to be appointed an Honorary Magistrate. However old or decrepit he may be he will never willingly relinquish the power and prestige which the position gives him in the eyes of other Indians. So you must not be surprised if you see on the bench an old man, hard of hearing and partially blind, who mumbles through his office and dispenses justice with half his faculties, while the other half just manage to keep him from falling asleep.

It is the police who really run these courts. A prisoner is placed in the dock charged with some minor offence. He almost always pleads guilty as a matter of course, raising his hands in supplication to the bench for lenient treatment, rather than attempting to deny the charge brought against him, or bring witnesses to prove his innocence. Everyone talks at once—the magistrate, his clerk, the pleaders, the police witnesses, and anyone else who fancies the sound of his own voice. The only decorum insisted on is that everyone inside the place shall uncover.



In the most important court, which is presided over by a European stipendiary magistrate, matters are somewhat more orderly, but even there the procedure leaves much to be desired. The accommodation is very limited and the atmosphere heated. The stipendiary is almost inevitably overworked, as before he takes his seat on the bench he has to receive numerous callers in his private room. His signature is required to all sorts of legal documents; junior magistrates wish to consult him; and there are a hundred and one things to be done which no one knows of, save those who have peeped behind the scenes. He is the butt of Press and public, a never-failing easy target for ignorant and careless criticism. The fact that he is a Government servant, and a European to boot, is quite enough to ensure that his actions are kept well in the limelight shed by the Extremist Press.

The police courts of India are good places to keep away from, whether you be prisoner, prosecutor, or a member of the general public.

A considerable amount of misconception exists in England as to the position of broadcasting in India. Perhaps a few facts may help to clear the ether of mental atmospherics.

People have asked me whether it is worth while taking their wireless set out to India with them. Assuredly it is; half-a-loaf is better than no bread, and you do sometimes hear concerts that are worth while listening to, even though the high standard set by the B.B.C. is not likely to be approached in India for many years to come.

It is expected that the new Indian Broadcasting Company will be in full swing this August (1927). Mr Eric Dunstan, the General Manager, has been telling us so in print, and apologizing for the fact that it will not be possible to get going at an earlier date.

This new company should prove a really good thing for everybody concerned, once the possibilities of wireless are realized by the millions of Indians who have the



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means to purchase a set and sufficient intelligence to use it. I imagine it will be rather like the initial stages of the motoring industry in India. As many Indians as possibly could, bought cars, and a week later fifty per cent. of them were out of order. I know Mr Dunstan pins his faith to the crystal set, and I hope for his sake that all crystal sets will be fitted with a permanent detector; the average Indian will not care to be for ever "finding the spot" and renewing crystals. The set for India must be as simple and fool-proof as it is possible to contrive—that is, if millions are going to use wireless. There is no reason why countless thousands of *purdah* women should not listen to music in their solitude. The many out-stations, too, will welcome wireless. What a boon to the weary tea-planter in Assam if he can turn on the music from a decent concert every now and then. I am afraid it will be only now and then, for, with a large majority of subscribers recruited from the Indian population, it seems likely that a great percentage of the music will have to be of the Eastern kind.

Until the formation of the Indian Broadcasting Company, wireless concerts were organized solely by enthusiastic amateurs in such places as Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. Their wavelength was not far-reaching. It may be interesting to recall these, before they slip into a mere memory. Bombay, 2FV, 385 metres; Calcutta, 5AF, 425 metres, 1½ kilowatts; Madras, 20 watts; and Bombay's second station, with the call sign 2AX, 50 watts. Colombo has a Government broadcasting station and operates on a wavelength of 800 metres, and will likely continue so to function for years to come under its present auspices.

In these various towns a Radio Club was formed, and enthusiasts gathered together to study wireless in the early days, and also helped with the programmes. Music, news and talks were sent over the ether twice a day, and the time-signal was given on a gong. The snag, of course, lay in the fact that the organizers of these concerts



had to depend, practically entirely, on the good nature of amateurs who gave their services by day and by night. It was no easy task to keep the ball rolling, and even so, little interest was taken in these affairs once the novelty of wireless wore off.

I can recollect sitting one night in the Grand Hotel, Calcutta, at a meeting of the European Association. Wireless had just started, and as an especial treat the audience was able to listen to a speech sent over the ether from a building not far away. Very little of what was said could be distinguished through that early type of loud-speaker, but what did materialize was naturally of a political nature; and when a bit later on the speaker came back to the meeting he then realized he had been placing the broadcasting people in danger of losing their licence. It was a condition of broadcasting that nothing of a political nature should be sent out, and the speaker was quite relieved to know that he had been well-nigh unintelligible, for he is a well-known local European barrister, and a great stickler for the upholding of law and order. Government, however, never knew, officially at any rate, for the Press agreed not to report the occurrence.

It seems strange in these days that such a performance should have then seemed worth while, when the speech could just as well—in fact much better—have been delivered in the presence of the audience. But of course wireless was then just a toy and nothing more. Why, I can recall a dance in Calcutta when the music was to have been supplied from a studio a few hundred feet away. If it had not been that a band was present in the room as a stand-by, however, we should have had no dancing at all, for the wireless music was audible a few feet away only, and then it came and went in spasmodic jerks, not nearly so clear as America can now be relayed by 2LO.

I can think of few more pleasant ways, from the purely European point of view, of spending a hot summer's evening in India, than by reclining in a long chair, with the inevitable iced whisky in a tall glass by my side, and listening to a good loud-speaker.



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In India, as at home, the question of "talks" is extremely debatable. I knew a man who had a wireless set to sell, in those early days of Indian broadcasting, and he had almost concluded a good deal. The prospective purchaser had already inspected the set, and appeared satisfied, promising to call next day and take it away. He came back during broadcasting hours, and the seller inquired whether his customer would not like to hear what was going on. The headphones were adjusted, and the man's face lit up with pleasure; but as he listened his smile gradually relaxed, and finally a frown puckered his brow. He removed the headphones and laid them down with an exclamation of disgust. He was not at all interested in a long and learned disquisition on the wonders and antiquity of the Great Wall of China, and he left the place refusing to complete his purchase.

It is difficult enough to please listeners in England, where professional material is so easily obtained; how the matter is going to be got over in the East I cannot pretend to be able to explain. Certain professionals who are touring the country may be induced, if the theatres do not object, to broadcast, but it seems to me that for many years to come there will be great scarcity of artists suitable for broadcasting. People may come out from England especially to tour the various stations, but this will be a very costly business, and unless the Broadcasting Company can guarantee them at least their expenses, I do not think the proposition is a feasible one.

How about picking up European broadcasting when you are in India? I am often asked about that. Certainly it can be done, but you must sit up half the night in order that a European concert may synchronize with Indian time. I have heard of a listener picking up the Savoy Bands at Darjeeling on a two-valve set. If he did so it was more or less of a freak, and not to be relied on as a regular source of entertainment. I believe a seven-valve set in Lucknow receives 2LO with fair success, and certainly the programme sent out by Philips Radio Ltd.,



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Eindhoven (Holland), on a short wave of 30 metres, can be picked up by a suitable set any time after 2 A.M. in many parts of India. This is good work, to receive a station, 6000 miles away, at tolerably good loud-speaker strength, on three-valves, and at good 'phone strength on two-valves.

When the time comes, and it cannot now be long distant, that English programmes can be picked up by the Indian Broadcasting Company and successfully relayed to its possible three million listeners, wireless will indeed come into its own all over the Empire, and certainly not least of all in India.

A celebrated actor may yet be enabled to read Dickens' *Christmas Carol* on Christmas Day to listeners all over the world, and Mr Rex Palmer bid the inhabitants of two hemispheres a cheery "Good-night." Only in those days it will have to be "Good-night" and "Good-morning."

The mention of Charles Dickens recalls to my mind a meeting in India with his youngest son. Last year a London newspaper reported that on the fifty-sixth anniversary of the great man's death a wreath of pink and white geraniums was laid on the tomb in Westminster Abbey with the inscription:

"In loving memory, from his youngest son, Charles Bulwer-Lytton Dickens."

The writing, on a half-sheet of black-edged paper, appeared to be in a woman's hand. It was stated that the wreath was placed on the tombstone by an old man, who said he had lately returned to England from India. He had passed out of the Abbey without being questioned by the vergers, who were not aware of the inscription until later.

It appeared that the officials of the Dickens Fellowship were not able to throw any light on the identity of the mysterious stranger, but stated that of the novelist's seven sons, Sir Henry Dickens is now the only survivor. The youngest son, Edward Bulwer-Lytton Dickens, was said to have died in Australia about eleven years ago.



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Despite the difference in the first Christian name I am not so sure that I did not meet this youngest son in Calcutta a few years ago. Certainly this must have been the old man who visited Westminster Abbey. He would be very feeble by now, for he had led a rough life and was in poor health, and it is quite possible that whoever wrote the memorial card made an error in writing "Charles." However, to my story.

Spences' Hotel, Calcutta, is one of the oldest hotels in India. It was there Lord Roberts stayed the very first night he landed in the country; this fact alone will give you some idea of the age and traditions of the hotel. The place is known from end to end of India as a hotel where the best of food is always to be had, and the reputation is based on fact, to which I am glad to testify, having had meals there for several years.

It was at tiffin at Spences' that I met Mr Dickens. He did not know me, but we began talking over the meal, and I soon learnt he was very upset by a film which was then being shown at a local cinema. This film was called *Oliver Twist*, and the old man was furious about it.

"My father would turn in his grave could he see the false impersonation of Oliver given by that boy Jackie Coogan."

The old man's white and abundant hair fairly stood on end with indignation, and a pair of the palest blue eyes I have ever seen flashed blue sparks. I confess to being more interested in the old man than I was in his grievance, but for a while I humoured him, and we discussed the film, which I also had seen, and I rather agreed with his criticisms.

Then, after a decent interval, I asked him if he was really a son of Charles Dickens. He saw that I was rather sceptical and was good enough to give me some of his history. This is as much of it as I can remember, but I have often subsequently heard him referred to as "Mr Dickens" by people in Calcutta. I give these particulars on the sole authority of the old man himself.



It appears that Mr Dickens had all his life been a rolling stone; he had done many things, and certainly had lived in Australia for some time. He eventually came to India, and bought a hotel in the Hills, at Simla, and he lived there most of the year, visiting Calcutta periodically and reserving a room, more or less permanently, at Spences'.

Amongst other stories he related was the thrilling one of the tragic death of the Prince Imperial. Mr Dickens was a cornet at the time of the Zulu Campaign, and was one of the few Englishmen present when the Zulus fell upon the Prince and dispatched him with their spears.

"The Zulus crept out of the field of maize, like so many grasshoppers," the old man told me; "they surprised us as we were dismounted; then, as we got mounted, the girths of the Prince's saddle slipped and he was flung to the ground and killed by the spear of one of the Zulus."

The story was told to me in plain soldier-like language, and I must admit it sounded genuine enough. But he might well have been there without being a son of Charles Dickens. Mr Dickens went on to tell me that at the time Lord Lytton, who then was Governor of Bengal, first arrived in the country he sent for him and offered him hospitality at Government House, in an annexe, saying that he was welcome to live there permanently if he so wished. However for some reason the offer had not been accepted. The old man had his small hotel at Simla and was probably quite comfortable there, and preferred to be independent. He certainly claimed to be a godchild of Lord Lytton's ancestor, who is to this day well remembered in India, and the second name, Bulwer, gives colour to the story.

Mr Dickens, when I last saw him, was a short little man, of rosy countenance, with a small white moustache; he walked with a slight stoop and appeared to be between sixty and seventy years of age.

I wonder what has become of the old man!



CHAPTER XVIII

Burma—A Peep at Rangoon—Wishing and Other “Belles”—
Nightmare Fish—Burmese Theatres

IT is over forty years since the whole of Burma finally came into British possession, and as the Indian army conquered the country under orders from the Viceroy of India, the territory thus acquired automatically became an Indian province. It, however, cannot fail to strike the visitor as peculiar that this very distinctive country, which, including the Shan States, totals an area of 240,000 square miles, should, after all these years, still remain a mere province of the Indian Empire. Burma is not accessible by rail, and is three days' journey by sea from the nearest important Indian seaport, Calcutta ; moreover, Burma is totally unlike India in almost every respect ; its people also are quite dissimilar.

There is a good deal of querulous comment, by both European and Burmese residents, as to the status of Burma ; it is considered desirable that this country of great natural resources should have more say in her own development. Why, it is said, should not Burma have its own Viceroy, and control its own destiny under the British Crown, instead of remaining a province, with a Governor, like its comparatively unimportant neighbour, Assam ? Burma does not care to have all its most important projects decided at Delhi or Simla, and does not like having to send representatives to the Indian Legislative Assembly.

Burma has all along filled the rôle of Cinderella in the Indian household, and disliked being brought into the orbit of the Reforms Scheme. The Indian Government has always grudged spending money on Burma, yet, as a European resident of Burma once put it to me : “ If the Indian Government had spent only half the money



on Burma that was wasted in Mesopotamia on irrigation and other schemes, the country would soon become one of the most fertile and prosperous in the world."

Buddhism is the prevailing religion of Burma; out of a total population of about 13,000,000 more than 11,000,000 are Buddhists. There are 500,000 Hindus, also 500,000 Mohammedans, while some 250,000 of the population are Christians.

The strength of Buddhism may be the better understood when it is realized that its priests number nearly 50,000. They are familiar sights, everywhere in evidence, with their bright yellow or saffron robes, worn like the toga of ancient Rome, and with heads kept close shaven. These priests are known as *phoongies*, and are mostly young men. They are vowed celibates, and take a three-fold vow of chastity, poverty and obedience. The student for priestly office may, before his vow is taken, help himself to anything on the table at a meal, but once he is vowed to poverty he may never help himself to anything; henceforth he must live only on those foods which are freely offered him. He is not allowed to possess money or goods of any kind, and depends entirely for every creature comfort on the generosity of his countrymen. Small wonder that begging has become a virtue in Burma.

Rangoon, the principal port of Burma, is also its capital. As a port it comes next in size and importance to Bombay and Calcutta, and, although situated some twenty-one miles up the river, ocean-going liners come right alongside the landing-stage.

The city is well laid out, is twenty-two square miles in area, and has a population of about 850,000. It is lit by electricity; and taxis, trams and rickshaws are the principal means of conveyance.

Colour and courtesy were perhaps the two chief attributes which most impressed me on my first visit to Rangoon. And I was greatly struck by the gay, independent Burmese, who revel in colour and love flowers



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and all the good things of life. These people laugh and smile their way through life, in happy contrast to the dour and morose type so frequently met with in India.

Rangoon has a rainfall of ninety-nine inches, which has given the city a permanent dress of green. Against this background, restful and pleasing to the eye, the many and varied colours worn by the Burmese show up in brilliant splendour. Gay paper sunshades of all hues protect the heads of the dainty little Burmese ladies, and fresh flowers bedeck the high-piled, jet-black hair, which the proud possessors have had the good sense not to shingle.

To get away from the harsh screaming of the raucous Indian voice was a pleasing relief, and there was altogether an absence of that irritating and constant noise to which one is only too unhappily accustomed in Indian cities. The orderliness and absence of confusion in street traffic, however busy the thoroughfare, was very noticeable; yet the police are Indians, Punjabis for the most part, and very smart they look in a gay uniform, poised erect on their stands in the centre of the road and shaded by canopies of stone or stucco, which look like giant toadstools. These Punjabis have evidently been taught that the more quickly traffic is kept moving the clearer will the roads be—a principle that police forces in India might be taught with advantage.

European sergeants of police are employed to regulate traffic at the most important and busiest points, working in the English style of two men at four cross-roads, and they manage to keep traffic moving at a good pace all day long. Traffic blocks are rare in Rangoon, and the police are greatly helped in their work by reason of the fact that all tram-lines are laid down the centres of the roads, leaving both sides of the street available for the unobstructed passage of motor-cars and other vehicles. It is worthy of note that fast traffic is invariably given the right-of-way preference.

There are lots of bullock-carts in the streets, and they are of much more solid construction than the Indian



variety, while the draught animals appear to be well fed and cared for. If cruelty to animals exists in Rangoon it is more rare, or much better concealed, than is cruelty in India.

Taxis are fairly plentiful, and in a much better state of preservation, and generally cleaner than those which ply for hire in Indian cities or elsewhere in the East. Save for the meter and the distinguishing "T" on the number plate, any of these taxis might easily be mistaken for private cars, so spick-and-span are they.

Perhaps the chief charm of Rangoon lies in its restful atmosphere of almost rural calm and peace, which rules outside the business part of the city. Wide asphalt roads, bordered by deep strips of grass and flanked with trees and hedges in quite an English style, stretch out in all directions. Picturesque, single-storeyed houses, constructed for the most part of wood, and painted a rich chocolate-colour, stand firmly on stout pillars of teak raised well above the ground, each in its own garden, wherein grow flaming red and purple flowers which scent the air and gladden the heart of the passer-by.

It is to this haven of rest and colour that the weary *sahibs* retreat quite early every afternoon (for in Rangoon all business offices close at the sensible hour of 4 P.M.) to seek rest and recreation in home or club. In this residential part of Rangoon it is easy to imagine yourself hundreds of miles away from town and sea, deep buried in the heart of a beautiful countryside, when in reality a fifteen minutes' run in a car will bring you to the streets and docks of a busy port.

It is early morning; in Rangoon you feel able, as well as wishful, to rise early. As you dress, a musical "*dong, dong, dong!*" comes floating on the breeze at pleasantly recurring intervals. It is the great bronze bell which hangs in the compound of the largest temple in Burma, the Shwe Dagon Pagoda. It is the wishing-bell, the prayer bell of the Buddhists.



Some little Burmese maid, dainty, spick-and-span, has likely risen with the dawn and is solemnly pounding out petitions with a hefty wooden ramrod, swung rhythmically against the stout side of the bell. It is tiring work, for the great bell weighs thirty-seven tons, and its sides are several feet thick. The little maid ceases, her tiny hands are tired; moreover, pounding the great bell is expensive, for an offertory-box is placed near by, with a watching priest, who counts the strokes and sees that just tribute is rendered by the suppliant. For a moment the bell is silent as the girl passes the ramrod to a waiting devotee, then once more the "*dong, dong, dong!*" is wafted on the breeze, telling all Rangoon that yet another worshipper is earning the right to pray for otherwise unattainable blessings. And who will be bold enough to say that the musical prayer, backed by the right motive, will not penetrate higher, far higher, than the topmost dome which glints in the sunlight over peaceful Rangoon! Even the most sceptical among us will not care to declare that the power of auto-suggestion is not aided by the pounding of musical metal.

Time was, and that not many years ago, when every European resident and visitor made a practice of visiting at intervals the great Shwe Dagon Pagoda. Now all that is changed.

The trouble started when the priests in charge of the temple were stirred up, by visiting seditionists, into a spirit of antagonism to British rule. These keepers of the temple were persuaded into making an order that all Europeans who wished henceforth to visit the place must take off not merely their shoes, but likewise their socks or stockings, and climb barefoot the hundred-odd wide stone steps which lead from the street itself to the plinth of the temple and the great courtyard, wherein the great bell stands beneath the shadow of the gigantic sitting Buddha.

These steps are lined on either side with stalls where are sold curios, sweetmeats, mineral waters, cigarettes,



and all manner of other merchandise; moreover, they are rarely, if ever, swept, and filth and garbage of all descriptions lie around in truly Eastern profusion. Smoking and spitting on the stairs was the order of the day, but this filth must not in future be desecrated by the clean sole of an English boot, lest the souls of the Faithful should be endangered.

As this departure was a new and objectionable one, of purely racial origin, the Europeans of Rangoon ceased visiting the Shwe Dagon Pagoda; moreover, they made it their business to explain to visitors why they also should refrain. Europeans visiting Rangoon mostly understood and took the well-meant advice, recognizing the deliberate affront which had been made to the white man. There are, however, those others to whom the people of a strange country are always more dear than those of their own. Thus it was that when Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, M.P., set foot in Rangoon he visited the Shwe Dagon, knowing full well the ban put upon it by Europeans. Ostentatiously removing his shoes and socks, he allowed himself to be thus photographed while ascending barefooted the steps of the Buddhist temple surrounded by a grinning multitude.

This was but one of the many indiscretions this modern Paget, M.P., permitted himself. He got into hot water, though, unfortunately, not by any means too hot water, wherever he went, and annoyed all Europeans with whom he came in contact by his foolish remarks and very pro-Indian attitude. There was a lively newspaper correspondence between the gallant Colonel and Mr Harry Hobbs of Calcutta, as straight and outspoken a man as ever walked the streets of the city. The Labour M.P.'s public boast that he paid his bearer Rs60 a month, and considered even that too little, was amplified by the statement that all Europeans in India should do likewise. All who recollect the correspondence will remember that Mr Hobbs got much the better of the exchange of pleasantries, though now I come to think of it not



every Indian would care to be a bearer to a Paget, M.P., so perhaps after all the money was well earned.

As far as I know, the ban on the Shwe Dagon holds good to this day. Certainly when the Prince of Wales visited Rangoon he gave the place a wide berth.

It is the vendors of curios and knick-knacks who are the chief sufferers in the matter of the temple. Their chief source of revenue has departed with the European visitors. I wonder if the priests compensated these unfortunate shopkeepers. Of course not. But I rather wonder what the priest in charge of the offertory-box beside the big bell thinks about it, for Christians used in olden days to give a pound as often as not. Their contributions were most certainly not less generous than those of the Buddhist suppliants.

Rangoon is, of course, frankly cosmopolitan, but nevertheless there is much of the real Burma to be found in this pleasant city. And that mystic "call" of the East is certainly more definite in Burma than is the case in many parts of India. The inhabitants are as yet unspoilt, save for a small party of malcontents which the Gandhi agitation brought into prominence. There are a large number of Indians in Rangoon, and part of the policy of the Indian Swaraj Party was to export seditionists to Burma in an attempt to stir up trouble for Government there. Just before the Prince of Wales visited Burma the police had a thorough round-up of these agitators, and clapped them into jail for the duration of the Royal visit, which thereupon passed off without any unpleasant incident.

In Rangoon there is not the hustling and rudeness which the pedestrian meets with in only too many Indian towns in these days of "reformed" government and decadent manners. The Burmese are an altogether more polite and considerate people. Their cheerfulness favourably impresses the stranger, and their courtesy is most pleasing. But they do not cringe; yet there



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is nothing of arrogance in the sturdy independence which distinguishes the Burman's dealings with the European.

The Rangoon bazaar is a delight to visit. If you are a woman the silk market will be found particularly fascinating. Here are little shops at which a whole family may be found in attendance. The Burmese mother will be there with her two dainty daughters, all richly garbed in silk brought from the mills owned by the family somewhere up-country. These people are well-to-do, and wear handsome ornaments; the diamonds in their rings are splendid stones.

These ladies do the actual selling, but a sturdy little Burman handles the heavy rolls of silk, dragging these down from spotless shelves, and smacking them down on the counter in quite the best London style. There is no haggling or bargaining. The fixed price is quoted, neither cheap nor dear but fair value for good material; you may either buy at the price asked or try your fortune elsewhere; and should you decide to pass on, the Burmese ladies still smile, and maybe hand you a cheroot by way of compensation for having missed so good a bargain. These dainty saleswomen are always glad to advise you on your purchases. You are told: "These silks are made for Burmese ladies, those others will please you better."

You buy or not as you think fit; there is not the least attempt at compulsion. But it is strange indeed if you can resist the rich thick silk made in all kinds of colours, and which gives almost everlasting wear. Few visitors to Rangoon come away without a few lengths of silk stowed away in their luggage, the English silk tax notwithstanding, and with them will go one or more of the fascinating Burmese sunshades, made of waterproof paper, brilliantly coloured and suitable to adorn the upper reaches of the Thames in sunshine or shower. Another useful purchase will be a few hundred Burma cheroots, which will cost you no more than cigarettes in



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Rangoon and are a much more satisfying smoke—but choose the dark squat variety and leave the “whackin’ white cheroot” to the Burmese.

Rangoon is growing in dimensions as well as in popularity, but it has certain limitations. The travelling European finds little to do in the city in the evening. There are no restaurants where you can take tea and listen to a band as you take your drink, or indulge in the festive little dinner which certain happy occasions indicate as fit and proper. In fact, the city itself is a closed book from 6 P.M., and the residents make their own fun in clubs and bungalows without troubling to return to the city until the following day. But if you have friends in Rangoon you will find yourself whirled away with the rest of those homeward-bound in the afternoon, and in the evening will discover that the drinks are longer and colder, and that dinners are eaten later, in Rangoon bungalows than in most places in the East.

Hotels are not numerous, and the largest of them is situated two miles from the town. There is ample room for more hotels, but I am told it is none too easy to obtain a licence in these days when the shadow of Pussyfoot is creeping over Burma—wet though the climate is—though I imagine its progress will be slow and uncertain.

This shortage of hotel accommodation operates against the prosperity of Rangoon, especially during October, when many visitors come from the east of India for their short annual holiday. Many of them are unable to stay in Rangoon merely because there is literally nowhere for them to sleep.

Maybe in some hideous nightmare you have found yourself gazing into a pool wherein are struggling ugly fish, thousands and thousands of them. Every now and then they all surge together to the surface in a mad rush, as if they were about to overflow and engulf you; and you stand and watch, incapable of movement, too horrified even to scream. You awake in a cold sweat, and next



morning at breakfast give the fish-course a "miss," with a muttered imprecation, which is neither understood nor appreciated by your wife, who has nerves of cast-iron and digestive organs an ostrich might envy.

You may repeat this dream in broad daylight any time in Rangoon if you take a trip to one of the lakes and watch the sacred fish. They are just like those of your dream, but the onlookers don't seem to mind, and throw food to these hideous, cold-blooded creatures with a prodigality worthy of a better object.

I enjoyed much better a visit to the timber enclosures, where are to be seen wonderful elephants lifting great solid timbers of teak, placing them in order just where they are wanted. Of all animals the most intelligent, these Rangoon fellows have formed a regular trade union of their own. When the bell rings for lunch in the yards they "down tools" immediately, and not another stroke will they do until the bell sounds again for resumption of work.

There are many delightful drives in and around Rangoon; the Royal Lakes are quite close to the residential quarter of the town, and seen by moonlight are a spectacle no visitor should miss.

Although from the purely European standpoint there is little diversion at night in Rangoon, the Burmese have their own amusements, and it will amuse and entertain you a while to watch a performance given in an open-air theatre. Burma is the land of colour, and even in the darkness of a Rangoon night there is light where high electric standards, from which swing great orbs of white brilliance, look down upon the open-air theatre so beloved of the Burmese. Here are no padded seats, no stout, red-faced, beribboned commissionaires, no programme sellers, even no queues for early doors; and if you wish to be fashionable, 11 P.M. is the time at which to attend.

The performance is held in the open street, where a large crowd of enthusiasts surround the stage, which



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consists merely of a crude elevated platform in the middle of the road. There is no drop-curtain and no dressing-rooms; the actors are on view the whole time the performance lasts. When one performer is tired, he or she just sits down and allows the others to continue.

There were three performers the night I watched one of these "shows," two men, and a girl, who was *prima donna* and *danseuse* in one. Music was supplied by a couple of tom-toms, and the native dance, or *nautch* as it is called, closely resembled the traditional Russian dance, with its whirling and kneeling motions, carried out extremely well. The dancer's turn finished, the lady squatted down on the platform and, drawing out a hand-mirror, proceeded to tidy her hair, the long coils of which had become loosened by her exertions. In quite the approved London restaurant manner she next proceeded to restore the ravages to her complexion, occasioned by dancing in the damp heat of a Rangoon summer's night.

In the meantime the two male performers kept up a dialogue, which, judging by the laughter of the audience, must have been very amusing, though it was quite wasted on me who knew no Burmese. At regular intervals a voice from the audience would call out, to be answered sharply by one or other of the actors. One of these was palpably the clown, for more kicks and slaps came his way than anything else.

The performance recalled accounts of the early Italian tumblers; surely there could be nothing more primitive than this open-air kind of performance. No attempt was made during my stay to solicit money from the audience, nor, in fact, did the players appear to receive any sort of reward for their strenuous efforts to please and amuse. Certainly no money was thrown on the stage, as is the invariable custom in Arab theatres when the efforts of the mummers are especially appreciated.

Maybe it was all done just for the sheer love of the thing, for it is quite possible that the Burmans, as well



as the Europeans, have their local amateur theatrical societies.

I summed up the Burman as a cheery, amiable soul, if somewhat temperamental. He is inclined to be hot-tempered, and rather too fond of settling his disputes by having recourse to the knife—a primitive form of argument which is not encouraged in these degenerate days by the authorities.

I would rather like to live in Burma ; it is a bright, friendly country, and though its rainfall is extremely heavy, and its heat apt to be rather oppressive, there are many worse places than this land of courtesy and colour. The Europeans there are great scouts ; long may they live to enjoy their special curries and wonderful cold drinks. But how any of them ever learn the language of the country is to me a complete mystery. To my untrained ear, Burmese sounded just like the beating together of two thick sticks.

Life would not be sufficiently long in which to learn such a language ; so it was in perfectly good English that I reluctantly bade farewell to green Rangoon and sailed away on my journey southward to Ceylon.



CHAPTER XIX

A Glimpse of Ceylon—Its Beauties and Fruits—Sprue—The Tourist's Paradise—Procession of the Tooth—The Smallness of Ceylon—Disappointing Colombo

A GREAT traveller once told me that Honolulu was the prettiest spot on earth and that Ceylon came next. I give his opinion without comment for I have not been to Honolulu, but Ceylon is certainly a beauty spot, healthy to reside in and wholly delightful to visit.

It is about the size of Ireland, and just as green for the greater part of the year. The climate is warm all the year round ; some people call it a sticky heat, for the air is very humid, but for all that the island is a more healthy place of residence than are most parts of India. There is less disease of all kinds, and the European residents have not the washed-out appearance which is all too prevalent in the plains of India. The centre of the island is very hilly, and the climate of Nuwara Eliya (pronounced Newrallia) is more like the weather experienced during a really warm English summer. There flowers grow in profusion, and at certain seasons the rain and mist are very reminiscent of conditions at home, without the biting cold and wind of the delightful Motherland with its abundance of weather and no climate. Nuwara Eliya is more than 6000 feet above sea-level though but 135 miles by rail from Colombo, which lies practically flush with the sea.

Colombo is the Clapham Junction of the East. Ships bound for India, Burma, China, British Malaya, Australia and New Zealand all pass here, and most of them stay for a day or two on the way. Indeed more and more is Ceylon becoming a winter resort for the tourist who wishes to bask in sunshine and avoid the cold and fog at home.



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These tourists come in shoals—as many as sixty thousand in a year pass through Colombo—and many stay for a month or two, while others merely come ashore while their ship is in port and re-embark for Calcutta, Rangoon and elsewhere. Especially is this the case with those passengers from great American liners chartered to convey the maximum number of people in the greatest possible comfort on their tour round the world. It is possible to land at Colombo and take a motor-car up to Kandy and come back the same day, though one does the thing better by staying up-country overnight.

Thus it is that all visitors stay long enough to disembark for at least one clear day. They are very welcome, for they contribute to the rapacity of rickshaw coolies and the drivers of motor-cars who disdain the use of a taximeter. Hotels cater especially for visitors and charge accordingly, and the servants of these establishments are past masters at extracting the small change left over. But one is not pestered in the streets to the same extent as is the case in Port Said, where goods of all kinds are thrust upon you whether you like it or not; and although beggars are to be found worrying around every now and then, they are not the insufferable nuisance their kind are in India.

The shops kept by natives of Ceylon bulge with ebony elephants, gems of all varieties (some obtained locally and others imported from Australia) and curios of other kinds, including Ceylon lace, which is usually excellent value for the money. Rupees and cents calculated on the decimal system are currency in Ceylon; Indian money is not legal tender, although there is no difficulty in exchanging, or even passing, Indian silver coins. Indeed most Indian customs and habits have to be forgotten when you come to Ceylon, and it is strange how common in England is the belief that the island is a part of the Indian Empire. In fact, the place has no more to do with India than has Newfoundland to do with Canada, or either of them with South Africa. Ceylon is a Crown



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Colony, with its own Governor and local legislature, owing ultimate responsibility to the Colonial Office.

English is the language most spoken in the Colony ; you hear it in the *pettah* (bazaar) as well as in the European shopping centre. Even the rickshaw man has a smattering of English, so the European visitor or resident need not trouble about Sinhalese or Tamil. It is only on the tea and rubber estates that a knowledge of the vernacular is necessary. Your servants all speak English in Ceylon. Indeed the servant who was spoken to in his mother-tongue would show considerable surprise, and possibly resentment, at your presumption of his ignorance of English. He is becoming rapidly modernized, and considers his value is reckoned largely by the test of his ability to think your thoughts and speak your language. The words *sahib* and *mem-sahib* are quite unknown ; in Ceylon it is always "Master" and "Lady." All this seems quite natural to the Englishman fresh from home, but totally foreign to the European accustomed to Indian ways.

There is no income tax in Ceylon, but a heavy tariff on all imports takes its place. Prices of most commodities are consequently high, and residents and tourists alike pay their tax to the country, indirectly but inevitably. The business community seems quite content with this method of taxation, but it is by no means certain that an income tax will not be introduced eventually ; already there are rumours of such a change.

Ceylon business circles are decidedly conservative in outlook and practice. The optimist, imbued with the laudable idea of coming to Ceylon with samples of the latest products of British industry, frequently finds himself up against a stone wall of prejudice. Markets are largely closed against him, as the shopkeepers will sell only that for which there is a steady demand ; competition is not sufficiently keen to call for much salesmanship on their part.

It takes years of spade-work and advertising to get a



new article on the market, but once this initial difficulty is overcome it will take still longer to displace it, and from this sure knowledge the new venturer into Ceylon markets must be content to extract such comfort as he can. Tea and rubber are the staple industries—in fact, practically the only ones of any account, and without them Ceylon would be known merely as a beauty spot. The breezes which blow are mostly from the sea and carry the aroma of seaweed; the visitor will sniff in vain for any trace of spice in the air—just as vainly as he will seek cinnamon in the Cinnamon Gardens, which a rickshaw coolie or taxi-driver will lure him into paying good money to visit. He may find a small park and lots of trees, but that will be the extent of his discovery, for the so-called Cinnamon Gardens is merely the name for a large residential district favoured by Europeans and the wealthy Sinhalese of Colombo, where rents of houses and servants' wages are higher than in other and less popular localities.

Coco-nuts are as plentiful in Colombo as are old maids in South Kensington, and they are similar in that they cluster in groups and live as high up as possible. I had almost forgotten these coco-nuts in speaking of Sinhalese industries. Though not on the same scale as tea and rubber, the exportation of copra is very considerable, and owners of large plantations find them a very pleasant and lucrative means of making a livelihood. Coco-nut palms need little attention, bear abundantly, and are fertile for about one hundred years. The ideal of many a Colombo business man is to retire to a small coco-nut plantation and live there happily ever after.

With a climate which is always warm, yet with a heavy rainfall, Ceylon rejoices in a vegetation which is luxurious. Everything is green which should be green, and there is lots of it; while flowers of the most dazzling and varied hue run riot in gardens, which in size and beauty compare very favourably with the average English country garden. But the penalty is paid in the number and variety of



those vexatious insects which make sitting in a cool garden a really lively business. The chemists are kept busy making up decoctions which are supposed to render one immune from bites. But the Colombo mosquito, if not often malarious, seems to thrive on chemical nutriment, and your ointment is but the sauce which makes more palatable the dainty dish beneath. And the little eye-flies are an even greater nuisance, for their minute size makes their presence almost invisible, though they make straight for your eyes, and worry and badger until their objective is gained, or die in the attempt.

It is strange that so many bungalows in Colombo are not provided with fans, or, if they are, that these very necessary adjuncts to life in the East are so sparingly used. If some of the money wasted on unwanted and unnecessary dishes were spent on electric current, great benefit to health and temper would result. In this respect they do things much better in India than Ceylon.

Fruit is fairly plentiful and various. The mangosteen, the most luscious of all Eastern fruits, has its home in Ceylon. The mango and the custard-apple also thrive there, while the pine-apple grows to a great size, and is infinitely more luscious and acceptable when cut fresh in Ceylon than are those of the tinned variety obtainable at home. Then there are bananas, fat, chubby ones; these are known throughout the island as plantains, though they are in appearance more like Jamaica bananas, and have not the size or coarseness of the plantains obtained from the West Indies. These Ceylon plantains, for delicacy of flavour, have the Indian variety beaten to a frazzle.

Sinhalese papaya, the fruit of the pawpaw-tree, likewise is of a better quality than that one is accustomed to in India. It is best eaten at breakfast, and in general appearance is somewhat like a small pumpkin, with a firm orange-coloured interior and numerous blue-black seeds, small and round as B.B. shot. This fruit contains a great deal of pepsin, and is an excellent digestive.



It is said that if a papaya is cut in half and a thick piece of tough steak placed therein and allowed to remain so encased all night, the juice of the fruit will by morning have rendered the steak perfectly tender. I have not had personal experience of this, but the housewife who at home has been accustomed to good steak will find in the East ample opportunities for testing the prescription for herself.

Bale fruit is another excellent product of Ceylon, though its properties are not sufficiently well known. About the size of a small coco-nut, and with a hard but quite smooth shell, this fruit appears internally as a stringy mass of orange fibre, which when worked at with a fork and strained through cheesecloth becomes an orange jelly. This, when mixed with milk and sugar, makes a delicious dish, very much like mango-fool. Quite apart from its pleasant taste, bale fruit possesses valuable medicinal qualities, being Nature's remedy for many internal disorders. Notably bale fruit can be used with wonderful results in the case of sprue, that dreaded Eastern disease which is yet little understood by medical men either as regards origin or cure. In Ceylon this dread disease is frequently spoken of as Ceylon Sore Mouth, probably because the name is indicative of the usual first symptoms of sprue. Pine-apples are the staple diet recommended by the best authorities in cases of this disease. As a drink, milk may be taken mixed with Vichy water, but all alcoholic liquor must be avoided. Toddy, an evil-tasting juice when tapped direct from the upper branches of coco-nut palm-trees and before fermentation has made it the popular strong drink of the poorer classes of Ceylon, is good for sprue when it is drunk in an unfermented state. A glass of this nasty stuff should be consumed once daily, preferably in the early morning.

All meat, save perhaps a little stewed beef, and ordinary diet must be abandoned, for the food which in health nourishes the body has no such effect when the consumer is a victim of sprue. No usual food can be digested, and



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the body derives no benefit at all from the ordinary sources of nourishment. Sprue is most difficult to cure ; its origin is obscure, and even few doctors profess to know much about this disease, which produces in the victim a speedy wasting of the tissues, so that the patient loses weight rapidly.

With some who suffer from sprue a trip to a cold climate is beneficial, while on others it has just the opposite effect.

I have mentioned this disease at some length because the subject is frequently discussed, and little or no information which is at all reliable can be obtained. People have strange ideas as to the origin and symptoms of sprue. Maybe this short account of the disease will be of service to some sufferer.

I knew two men who had contracted sprue. One was treated in the way I have indicated, and rapidly put on weight. He ultimately became cured of the trouble. The other poor fellow was treated by doctors who wrongly diagnosed his case, and when at length the real trouble was discovered it was too late to save the patient's life.

The visitor can have a splendid time touring in Ceylon. Those who like thrills will find plenty on the rocky roads, where hills tower above on your right and precipitous depths await to engulf a careless motorist who steers too much to the left. And by train, too, you will find it far from dull. Trains travel slowly in Ceylon ; they are obliged to, because of the steep gradients encountered. If when coming down on the night mail you see from your sleeping-berth the form of a man creeping stealthily along the footboard, do not be alarmed ; he is only the guard proceeding warily to the rear of the train to apply the hand-brake. They make up the trains strangely in Ceylon, and you can never be sure just where the brake-van will be situated, nor even where the guard is to be located. Your train winds round and round in an apparently endless spiral ; fast travelling is impossible,



combined with safety. You will understand it better when you pass what is known as Sensation Rock, if you ever have the opportunity of visiting Ceylon.

The student of archæology will find much to interest him in the many wonderfully preserved ruins of palaces, rocky fortresses and ancient temples of a country whose recorded history dates back to at least five hundred years before the landing, in 543 B.C., of the Indian Prince Vijayo. Europeans first came to Ceylon long afterwards. In A.D. 1505 the Portuguese occupied the maritime regions of the island, but the Sinhalese held sway in the interior. It was these Portuguese who introduced Christianity to the native inhabitants, which accounts for the fact that the vast majority of the Christian residents there to-day are adherents of the Roman Church. The Dutch appeared in Ceylon some one hundred and fifty years later and confined their activities to trading; many of them amassed great fortunes by trading in pearls, spices, and other products of the country. Some of the old Dutch buildings are to be seen in Ceylon to the present day, but in matters of religion the Dutch took little concern. The many *de Silvas*, *Periaras* and *Ferandos* which are to-day to be found in the country are in themselves sufficient testimony to the thoroughness of those early Portuguese missionaries.

The visitor who chances to be in Ceylon during August, and who does not mind missing the so-called glories of Colombo's "August Week," would do well to make the journey to Kandy to witness the annual ceremony known as the Procession of the Tooth. It is firmly believed by all good Buddhists that this tooth was once securely fixed in the jaw of the god Buddha. If an unbeliever, you may have strong doubts on the matter, but no Buddhist can confess to any such doubt; and when you actually see the tooth your doubt will be turned into certainty, for it is of immense size. Verily there were giants in those days.

However, there are pilgrims in thousands who annually



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make a pilgrimage to the island from all parts of the East to worship the sacred relic, and it is no concern of mine to pass judgment on their religious beliefs. If you ever have the chance, go and see for yourselves. So, with a warning against the advisability while in Ceylon of openly giving expression to any doubts you may have on the subject of the tooth, I recommend you to see this gorgeous festival, the very existence of which is scarcely known in Western countries.

You may travel to Kandy by train or motor-car. Either way the journey is delightful, but the train takes longer to accomplish the gradual ascent. The scenery is varied and beautiful in the extreme, while Kandy itself is considered by much-travelled people to be one of the most beautiful towns in the world. By distance some seventy-five miles from Colombo, you will be more than 1600 feet above sea-level when you reach Kandy. The vegetation is truly luxurious and the town is set in the midst of thickly wooded countryside, while the climate of Kandy is considered by many to be the best in Asia.

Facing the lake, which is one of Kandy's most notable features, is the Temple of the Tooth, wherein the sacred relic reposes for three hundred and fifty-five days out of every year. This temple is a singularly picturesque building, surrounded by a verandah, and capped on one end by a turret.

If you care for such things you may visit the Library of Sacred Works, which is situated alongside. Here the priest in charge will, for a small consideration, give you an actual demonstration of the primitive methods employed in days gone by in writing the manuscripts which can still be examined in the library. These ancient documents are written with indelible ink, upon pressed palm leaves and in the form of a scroll, in much the same conformation as was customary in olden days in Egypt and elsewhere.

The preliminary rites in connexion with the Procession of the Tooth take place within the precincts of the Temple



itself the same evening the procession is to start. The Head Chief, who is the guardian of the Temple and the lineal descendant of a long line of Sinhalese chieftains, dresses specially for the solemn occasion. His gold robes and headpiece, shaped in the form of a triangle, tone well with a bright-coloured waistcoat, and the combination contrasts strangely with the very ordinary and simple saffron robe of the humble Buddhist priest whose duty it is to wait on the high functionary of the Temple. The priest holds a bowl of water and carefully washes the hands of the Chief, and then produces a fine piece of silk material, which is placed over his outstretched hands. Next, to make doubly sure that human flesh comes not in contact with even the casket which contains the sacred relic, a second cloth, this time of rich velvet, is placed in position over the more delicate silk. And now at last the casket itself, fashioned from pure gold and emblazoned with precious stones, is given by the priest into the hands of the Chief, where it reposes, sacred, safe and sound; moreover constructed so that the Tooth of Buddha can be made presently visible to the worshipping crowds without.

The Chief next proceeds down the Temple steps and carefully places the precious relic, resting on its casket, in the small *howdah* on the back of the sacred elephant, which kneels obediently in the courtyard below to receive its light and supernatural burden. The elephant is clad in trappings of costly velvet embroidery, and the *howdah*, which is used for this special purpose only, is a most tasteful bit of the craftsman's art, and is illuminated by many coloured lights.

All is now ready. The *mahout* whose duty it is to lead the sacred elephant in the great procession stands close beside it. At a given signal the elephant is made to rise; and the Procession of the Tooth is on its way. All along the route Sinhalese men are posted, whose duty it is to hold aloft great flaming torches, and the procession is headed by a couple of score of devil dancers. These men



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are dressed in fearsome attire and carry what appear to be sticks of gold, though in reality these are bits of wood covered with gilt paper. The devil dancers leap, run and twist in the most grotesque manner possible, while bells which are fastened to arms and legs create an incessant tinkle, which music is supported by the more strident crashes of cymbals struck violently together at regular intervals.

Next in order walks the Chief himself, pacing slowly and with fitting solemnity a few yards in front of the sacred elephant, which walks alone, unattended save for the *mahout*, who, unlike others of his calling, must needs walk beside his elephant instead of riding upon the great animal's neck. From the moment the sacred elephant leaves the courtyard with its precious burden its feet are not allowed to come into actual contact with the ground, for fear of possible pollution. A great red carpet is spread out before the animal and it is made to walk along the three feet of width. As it progresses, the carpet is rolled up from behind, until nearly all of the hundred feet or so of crimson glory are used up. Then willing hands spread a shorter piece in front, on which the elephant may walk while the huge roll is brought to the front and once more opened out in elongated splendour. This procedure is repeated along the entire route of the procession, which makes an extended tour of ten or more miles every night of the Perehara Festival, which continues for ten consecutive nights.

Behind the sacred elephant come, in strict order of precedence, other chiefs and elephants. All are most gorgeously arrayed, and as each village sends its chief, a great number of devil dancers, and all the elephants which can be begged, borrowed or otherwise procured for the occasion, it is not to be wondered at that often the elephants in the Procession of the Tooth number close on a couple of hundred. What a procession it is to be sure! It must be seen to be appreciated fully. The whole route is ablaze with primitive lights, and



packed closely at every conceivable point of vantage stand thousands of the Faithful, while here and there are to be seen, in some special position from which a good view may be obtained, alien spectators who are present from no better motive than that of mere sightseers.

It is not until the early hours of the morning that the progress comes to an end and the return to the Temple of the Tooth is accomplished and the relic put back into safe custody until the next day of procession.

You will likely see photographs of this great religious march ; such must have been taken in daylight on the last day of the festival of Perehara. On all other days it takes place at night, for much of its impressiveness is lost in the strong light of day ; mysteries keep better in the dark.

Whatever your religious convictions may be, the Procession of the Tooth cannot fail to interest. It has much the same significance for Buddhists as has the taking of the Holy Carpet to Mecca for those people who are followers of Mohammed. And, quite apart from its religious importance, the affair is one of the worth-while sights to be witnessed in Ceylon.

If you stay sufficiently long in the island you may have the opportunity of going out, with someone who knows the ropes, on one of the expeditions organized by Government to round up wild elephants. You will get plenty of thrills, and maybe some good photographs if you do not mind running a few risks. The way in which a captive elephant will be put in charge of two tame fellows and led off by them to learn the sweets of civilization is a demonstration of the sagacity of the world's largest and most intelligent animal. You can almost hear the whispers of good advice which are poured into the captive's huge ears by the protesting fellow's jailers.

You may even go pearl-fishing if fortune favours you. Whether you are actually present at the scene or not, it is always possible afterwards to purchase a bag of oysters for quite a nominal sum and open them up and find what



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you may in the way of a prize. Assuredly out of a whole bag you will discover a pearl or two of sorts, and you may come on one which has a high market-value. You will notice advertisements in the local papers offering pearl oysters for sale by the hundred. Many a man has lived to bless the day he sported a few rupees and found a pretty present to give to someone who was fond of pearls. The merely mercenary fellow just sells the pearls for cash.

But whichever kind of man you be who goes opening oysters, be sure you smoke a strong tobacco while you pry open the decomposed shell, for, unless the tobacco be really strong, you will likely be bowled over by the sickening odour which will come up at you like poison-gas.

There are lots of other things to do during a visit to Ceylon. You can arrange to stay a week or two with a planter on a tea estate. It will cheer him up to have company, and make you appreciate your cup of tea better when you know the labour and loneliness which have gone to its successful production. You will find the real Ceylon up-country. Your trip to the island will be very pleasurable if you keep to the jungle and the everlasting hills.

To anyone used to the life of Indian cities Colombo is a very dull place. There is little to do there in the evening, and, apart from tennis at the club after office, and perhaps a swim at Mount Lavinia or in the baths at an hotel, you might as well be in the jungle. For, although boasting the pretensions of a modern town, Colombo is in fact only a glorified village, badly built and shockingly laid out. Moreover, the mental outlook of the residents as a whole is extremely narrow and hopelessly provincial. The local politics of Colombo are, frankly, those of the parish pump. Scandalmongering as a favourite pastime is second only to bridge—a disease bred of extreme ennui long endured.



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Snobbishness is rampant. This is always the case in towns like Colombo, where few of the residents are sufficiently sure of themselves to follow their own inclinations. It is so much easier for such people to follow one another, like so many silly sheep.

Ceylon is very small—about the size of Ireland. Littleness and great conceit frequently go together. So it is with Ceylon; for there is a popular local belief that the island is the site of the Garden of Eden, that it is the first and last place on earth, and is entitled to set the fashion for the rest of the East, if not the entire world.

It was my fortune to stay in Ceylon a couple of months, so I know something of its social atmosphere and deadly dull outlook. Colombo may be commended to the notice of tourists who have much money to spend and are not keen judges of values. As a jumping-off place for the rest of the island Colombo is an ideal spot; only be sure you jump quickly and far enough.

If you seek permanent, or semi-permanent, residence abroad, go to India, Burma, British Malaya, Siam or South Africa—you can settle comfortably in any of the towns and make friends in these places—but count Colombo out. You must be of a peculiar type and temperament to be content there, and few of us are peculiar people.

I have the greatest respect for the judgment of Bishop Heber; you will find his considered opinion of Ceylon in that well-known hymn, *From Greenland's Icy Mountains*.

There are some splendid people up-country and just a few in Colombo, and these think pretty much as I do on the subject, but all of them cannot afford to say so. The vast majority of the Europeans who live in Colombo have been there so long, and have sunk into such a groove in the little place, that they have lost all sense of proportion, and forget the size and general insignificance of the island, as compared with the great countries of the world.



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Imagine a town the size of Colombo, the capital of an old British colony, and with a population of two hundred and fifty thousand souls, having no sort of theatre, either European or Sinhalese, but instead a wretched "public hall," which is totally unsuited to the requirements of the town. No wonder most touring companies out East give Ceylon the go-by!

Fancy living—out East, of all parts of the world—in a town where most of the residents retire to bed soon after 9 P.M., and whose servants consider themselves badly treated if asked to do duty after dinner at night. Any-one who judges the East by Colombo will be grievously disappointed in the Orient.

Therefore if you think of coming East, and wish to get the most out of life, go elsewhere than Colombo. If, on the other hand, you like narrow suburban life, and the petty scandal and foolishness of what is, according to the words of one of His Majesty's judges, the limited intellectual outlook of something familiarly known as "Upper Tooting," make your home in Colombo. In which case I wish you joy of it.



CHAPTER XX

Impressions of England after Long Absence

TO know and appreciate England fully it is necessary to have been abroad for a really lengthy period. Those people who have never experienced the joys of home-coming after exile can have little or no conception of what this return means—the first real holiday after long absence from your native land. You may be coming home on leave, or you may be returning permanently; it is all one for the first few weeks, but later on there is a vast difference.

First impressions are ever the most vivid, and as these quickly fade I am writing from notes I made during the first few weeks after I arrived in London.

Amid the dust-storms of Irak, with its high, dry temperature, and when drenched in the moist unpleasantness of the tropical heat of the Indian plains, the exile thinks longingly of England and all that England means to him. It stands, among other things, for health, renewed vigour of mind and body, pure water, and food of infinite variety.

Your first impulse on landing differs according to your sex: if you are a man you feel like falling down and kissing the very ground upon which you stand, while women have told me they had the insane desire to throw their arms round the neck of the first policeman they came across.

As a striking contrast to the dark-skinned crowds which throng Indian cities—olive in Bombay, brown in Calcutta, almost black in Madras—the sea of white faces in the London streets was very noticeable at first. And the city itself had changed in many ways: old landmarks had disappeared, streets had been widened, and many



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new buildings erected. After an absence of nine years I noticed many changes.

A new generation has arisen which knows not the War, and many of my generation who remember would fain forget. London is full of war memorials to the British dead, while live ex-Service men tramp the streets in their thousands, seeking employment with a dogged patience and endurance which is a tragic memorial to the living.

How soon we forget! London is once again overrun by the foreign element. You find them performing at music-halls and theatres, while clever British artists seek vainly for work. At one famous cabaret I found almost the entire programme filled by foreigners: French, American—any nationality but British. The accent of most of the waiters, too, would have been considered sufficient to cause their internment during the war. I wondered as I watched this particular show whether the management had any conception of what it feels like to an Englishman back from the tropics after many years to find London given over to the foreigner in this way. Poor Harry Fragson seems to have no successor willing or able to set to music this very real grievance of his fellow-artists, and thereby cause British audiences to consider carefully their placid acceptance of this unpalatable fare of foreign importation which is being served up to them night after night. It is expensive, and much of it is bad, stupid, unintelligent and unintelligible to the average Briton.

England in general, and London in particular, appears on the surface prosperous to a degree. It is certainly as fascinating as ever to the holidaymaker with money to spend: light and music are everywhere; many more people throng the streets and crowd the restaurants and places of entertainment. In the West End money appears to be plentiful, while the temptation to spend freely is dangled more cleverly than ever before your eyes.

The universality of the lunch, tea and dinner orchestra



is very noticeable, for nowadays no large store or restaurant seems complete without those artists who so successfully take the "rest" out of restaurant and put the "din" into dinner. Still, for all that, it is very jolly, and it is especially refreshing to find places where it is possible to enjoy a dance on Sunday afternoon or evening—an almost unheard-of thing in other days.

How good it was once again to have a cut from a joint of genuine roast beef, after living for years on scraggy mutton, emaciated cow-meat, or the everlasting curry-and-rice of the unchanging East. How good once again to see the top of an egg protruding boldly from the egg-cup, instead of having to dive down into the depths of the receptacle and chase the oval object with a spoon. It was good to have a plentiful supply of fresh and wholesome water, which needed no boiling or doctoring to make it fit for human consumption. And it was certainly comforting to be able once again to wear tweeds and a warm cap, after being condemned for nine-tenths of each of many past years to dress in cotton or silk suits, which soil or crumple into damp unpleasantness after a few hours' usage. My head was at last freed from the binding pressure of the *sola topi*; my rapidly thinning hair could grow thick once again.

Talking about dress reminds me that in some ways we in the East do things better than people in a post-war England.

"Shall I dress?" appears to be a very necessary question to put when asked out to dinner in London nowadays, for few people seem to trouble about changing when going out for the evening. Many Londoners now take their pleasures clad in their office clothes—a mere postscript as it were to the writing of the last business letter of the day. Time was when they commenced another life when work was finished, but now day is merged in night, with no apparent break. This dressing for dinner seems to be of little account in England, where the slight trouble brings so much extra pleasure



and comfort; whereas in the East dressing for dinner is the invariable rule, although it is an uncomfortable and seemingly useless procedure in many cases.

Maybe people in England go out in the evening less than of yore; certainly the cost of laundry has increased. In fact one hostess of mine gave it as her considered opinion that men to-day grudge the eighteen-pence charged for the laundering of a boiled shirt. Greater London has much to answer for in this respect: many people now live so far outside London itself that there is literally no time in which to travel home and change between a business and pleasure engagement, and once a man has got inside his own door after a tiring day in the City he is loath to go out again. Still, whatever the reason may be, this change in the habits of Londoners seems regrettable.

I noticed more colour everywhere than was to be seen when I was in England before. Houses are no longer painted nearly all alike. Cheerful colour-schemes are to be seen; orange doors and bright curtains gladden the eye and show up gaily against the leaden sky. An air of joyous unconventionality has, to a large extent, taken the place of the monotonous sameness with which England used to be afflicted in other days. Particularly is the brilliance in colour noticeable in women's dress. Any crowded shopping centre, when viewed from the top of an omnibus, is a cheerful sight; the hats and dresses of the fair sex form a veritable kaleidoscope of gay colours. The umbrella manufacturers have at length discovered that an umbrella need not necessarily be black in order to be rainproof. The effect of all this colour is cheering to the soul, and compensates to a great extent for the too often cheerless weather.

Particularly striking was the amazing cleanliness of the streets, with their almost complete absence of dust or mud, especially in London; though even in the country nearly every main road is now tar-sprayed or otherwise rendered dustless. What a change from the old days,



when dust was laid on dust, well watered and pressed in, only to rise again the first dry day a heavy vehicle passed over the surface of the newly "mended" road. Motoring has indeed come into its own, and the horse as a draught animal is slowly but surely retiring from service. Indeed it is nothing short of cruelty to make horses use many of the new roads, which are polished like a mirror and as slippery as ice. It was a relief to see no straying cows and bullocks such as clutter the pavements of even the greatest Indian cities. I missed also the heaps of garbage, which, in the East, you find strewn everywhere and surrounded by clouds of flies; likewise those blood-red stains of the chewed betel-nut with which Indians stain everything within range.

There are some once familiar things in England which are there no longer, and for these I had no regrets. Gone is the man leading a captive bear; gone, too, is the organ-grinder with his half-starved and wholly frozen monkey. When one has been accustomed to seeing animals in their natural environment it is not good to see them being dragged through the streets in captive misery, their degraded charms and shorn strength exhibited for man's financial gain.

I was sorry to find that D.O.R.A is still alive and apparently good for many years to come. Her stupid regulations persist, though all need for them departed when peace was declared—or certainly very shortly afterwards. Englishmen home on leave will be surprised to find that while many small shops keep open late at night, only certain commodities may be sold from the stock in those shops. You may buy a candle, but you cannot buy a match after 8 P.M. with which to light it; and although you can buy sweets or cigarettes from an automatic machine outside the tobacconist's shop, the proprietor of both shop and machine may not sell you cigarettes over the counter. If you are in the vicinity of Piccadilly Circus and for old time's sake stroll into that cosmopolitan hotel known on every fighting front as "the subaltern's

paradise," you may get a whisky-and-soda in the lounge if you tell the waitress you are a resident. If, however, you admit you are not for the moment a resident, you must wait for your drink until 7 P.M. So I could go on multiplying instances of the puerile regulations which still hold England in their grip. You lovers of bridge keep tight hold on your packs of cards, for otherwise if you land in London after 8 P.M. you will not be able to purchase any, and must for once forgo your nightly "rubber."

The excuse that these regulations are kept going to protect shop assistants against long hours is ridiculous. It is the shopkeepers in the suburbs who feel the pinch. These little people are working long hours, not for fun but to make a bare living. The proprietor of the shop is the man behind the counter, and he relies very largely on the "catch trade" which comes his way of a night because of the large suburban population around him. Why should he be compelled to throw away the remainder of his stock of ice-cream because it has struck eight, and he is not allowed to sell it to the young couple who stroll in after their evening walk and want something cold? If the shopkeeper likes to work long hours in order that he may pay his rent regularly, who has the moral right to try to force him into bankruptcy? Nobody. Yet D.O.R.A. has a legal right, filched from the people of England under threat of a national crisis. The retention of this right many years after the emergency has ceased to be is a scandal at which every returned Englishman marvels.

Verily the people at home are the most patient in the world, and the most law-abiding. I wonder for how long this will be the case.

Fashions have changed very much since 1916. I like the short skirts of the women and girls of to-day, but I hate their short hair; and the shorter it is the more I hate it. Ten years ago women displayed more originality; now they all look alike, with their cropped heads and



pull-on hats. Woman has sacrificed her crowning glory for the sake of displaying her neck and ears, and in the process has lost much of that secret charm which previously made her attractive to man.

The ordinary man likes his fellows to be manly and women to be feminine, and nothing is so essentially feminine as beautiful long hair. Most men will agree with me, but few have the courage to express their opinion or stand up for their convictions in front of their "beheaded" wives and sisters.

Yes, I thought the women in England had lost charm. And they have had to pay for their independence. How otherwise can you explain that it is no longer unusual to see a man retain his seat when a woman enters his presence? Seats in trains, tubes and buses are securely held by their male occupants; women are allowed to stand up for their rights—in more senses than one. Such behaviour amongst white people in the East is quite unthinkable!

As a counterblast to the masculine woman there is growing up a race of feminine men. Thank goodness they are confined to the large towns at home, and it is to be hoped that public opinion will wither these delicate plants before they attain maturity.

You will find plenty of these long-haired young men, with high-pitched voices and feminine ways, in London. If you are lucky enough not to meet them personally you can hardly fail to see their imitators on the stage. The plays which were drawing the biggest crowds when I was at home were those which were known to illustrate all that was most degenerate and distasteful in modern "society" life. It took a good pair of opera-glasses, and plenty of imagination, for the occupants of the circle to be able successfully to sort out the men from the women on the stage before them.

However, let me come to dogs, for, as the great illusionist, Lafayette, used to say: "The more I see of fellow-man the more I love my dog."



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Even in the dog-world fashions have changed. I missed the bulldogs, the retrievers, and the massive St Bernards I used to meet when out walking. Gone, too, are the Dalmatian coach-hounds, the plum-pudding dogs of our childhood. No longer do their spotted bodies trot along beneath smart dog-carts. Of course there must be some of the old breeds of dogs left in England, but they are no longer fashionable ; you do not see them in the parks and streets as was the case a few years ago.

I saw plenty of new breeds, notably the Alsatian wolf-hound ; but he too closely resembles the wolf and jackal of the desert to have much claim on my conservative affections. These Alsatians have already proved costly pets to a great many people, and I think their popularity will be short-lived.

The standard of living in England has undoubtedly risen since the war ; mere observation alone shows that to be true. People are better dressed than they used to be, and this is the case with even the poorest. It is rarely that you now see children running about minus shoes and stockings. True, there is misery in plenty, but it is better clothed than of yore.

There is much less drunkenness. The previously all too-frequent sight of a drunken man or woman has practically vanished from the streets. It is good to realize that this has been made possible without the introduction of prohibition. The drunkard is no longer considered a fit subject for humour, but a menace and nuisance to temperate people—something decidedly out of fashion.

The amazing increase in street traffic cannot fail to impress the newly returned exile. It is almost as difficult to cross the street in London as it is in Paris.

The gyratory system of traffic speeding-up has been extended all over the West End, and the pedestrian must now run for his life or burrow underground like a rabbit. The stream of traffic seems endless, and with thousands of new motors coming on the streets every week no one can tell what ultimate solution of the



traffic problem will be found. There are now few of the old type of omnibus left. In their place are gigantic vehicles, broad and steady, with sensible covered-in tops, suitable for a climate which produces more rain than sunshine. Sliding glass windows provide ventilation, and these new buses are most comfortable and well-lit public conveyances. A great change for the better.

There is no better way of seeing England than by car, so I entered a post office in one of the London suburbs and asked politely for a driving licence. The young lady looked mildly surprised and directed me to Westminster. I was hopelessly out of date. In the old days one got a driving licence from any post office just as easily as one bought a stamp. Now all that is changed. So off I went to Westminster.

The uniformed attendant at the gate at once spotted me as a stranger. He was right; it was my first visit to the County Hall, Westminster. Passing beneath the archway I was making uncertainly for the first pair of swing doors in view, when his friendly hail, "Can I help you, sir?" caused me to pause.

"Indeed you can!" was my instant reply. "I want a driving licence."

The attendant piloted me into a kind of glorified sentry-box, arranged pen and ink before a printed form, and instructed me in the filling up thereof.

"Now, sir, go straight through those doors, turn sharp to the left and take the form to Room 94."

I thanked him gratefully for his courtesy and went on my way.

The man in uniform must have had a busy day. I found myself one of a hundred others lined up in a queue which was passing in an anti-clockwise direction round a large room. Our objective was a long counter, like that of a bank, with substantial-looking rails dividing us from the busy officials seated behind. These gentlemen seemed to have solved the problem of perpetual



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motion, for they worked without the slightest pause, and at great speed.

What a mixed and orderly crowd we were ! It reminded me of the crowd, on that hectic day on which commenced the General Strike, which lined up in the courtyard of the Foreign Office to register for service during the national emergency. There were young men and old men, little slips of girls and middle-aged matrons, while here and there a youth was to be seen holding himself especially erect, as though to prove his written pledge of being over seventeen. There were young men of fashion ; stout, red-nosed taxi-drivers, whose appearance recalled vividly the days of hansom and "growlers" ; smart drivers of the Royal Army Service Corps, complete with numerous army forms filled up in triplicate ; white-coated bus-drivers, their shiny, blank-peaked caps acock at the approved angle, all waiting and anxious to be attended to, but all equally good-tempered and considerate of the rest.

Thus we moved slowly round, without any pushing or flurry, taking our turn to obtain the right to drive and control an engine of pleasure or business, for a period of twelve months, upon the highways of Great Britain. And we were all certain to get our licences, quite irrespective of any special ability, or even competence, to drive motor-vehicles. The drivers of cars and buses plying for public hire had of course all passed their police tests, but the rest of us might, for all the authorities knew to the contrary, be blind, deaf, dumb or quite mentally unsound. No matter : five shillings and a simple form correctly filled in did the trick every time.

First we came one by one in front of the official I will call the scrutineer ; he saw that the form was correctly filled in. That which belonged to the little lady who immediately preceded me had to go back twice for revision. Her third name, Henrietta, she had coyly omitted to declare ; she had also forgotten to affirm that she was over seventeen. The scrutineer smilingly, but firmly



insisted on these necessary details. But he was very tender withal, though I was not surprised at his implied credulity as to the girl's age; she looked a mere child.

A hastily scrawled initial, the imprint of a rubber stamp, and I was safely over the first hurdle. Next on the list of obstacles to be negotiated came the fatherly and urbane cashier. He was very brief. "Five shillings, please," and he took my form and stamped it yet again, then tossed it into a handy wicker basket, whence it was retrieved by a young man bent low over a desk and rapidly qualifying for writer's cramp, to judge by the speed at which his pen travelled.

"Now pass right on, gentlemen, please; make room for the public," was the cashier's constantly repeated admonition; and we who could no longer consider ourselves merely of the public moved on accordingly, duly accredited and accepted drivers of motor-propelled vehicles, but yet waiting for the official card with which we could for the next twelve months satisfy the curiosity of any inquisitive policeman.

We now stood in a group, six or seven deep, before three industrious fellows, who were busily dealing with the little licence-books which came at them, thick and fast as bullets, from the aforesaid stooping youth. Each of the men had his own basket, into which a fair share of books fell, to be adequately and swiftly dealt with in strict rotation.

A name is called, and in response an arm is thrust from out the waiting crowd. A new or renewed licence changes hands, and the proud owner slips out of the room clothed with full authority to take his or her place at the steering-wheel of a car, or to drive a motor-cycle. And so the stream of motorists must go on all day and most of every day, Sundays and Saturday afternoons excepted. Motorists manufactured by mass production at the rate of five a minute. It was all most efficient and praiseworthy.

Thus it was that I obtained my motor-driving licence



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when on leave last time; and if the time expended was greater than was the case in pre-war days, the time I spent in the County Hall, Westminster, was vastly more interesting.

Having been accustomed so long to the erratic and nerveless control of traffic in the East, the excellent system of police control in London struck me with renewed admiration after absence. Despite the amazing volume of traffic, London is still a much safer place for both motorist and pedestrian than is either Bombay or Calcutta. The police have much to do with it, but I cannot omit to pay a tribute to both public and private drivers who have such admirable road sense—something which is almost entirely lacking in drivers of the East.

When I was in England previously there was no broadcasting. In the East there is still very little compared with the highly efficient and highly organized British Broadcasting Corporation, which brings such joy and entertainment into thousands of lives which before were comparatively empty. No great enthusiasm for broadcasting can be expected in the East until the outside world can be picked up with ease and certainty, and until the problem of atmospherics is successfully solved once and for all time.

The programmes in the East are as yet mostly of an amateurish nature, and a certain monotony is inevitable in these early days.

To the newly returned exile, wireless at home is perhaps the greatest wonder of all; certainly it struck me as the change which was the most welcome. As I travelled up from Tilbury the many aerials, mounted on even the smallest houses, were an astonishing sight. Even if people cannot afford a first-class clothes-line they will manage to fit up a first-class aerial. I appreciated this point of view better after I had successfully installed a simple crystal set, got thoroughly bitten by the craze, and changed over to a three-valve loud-speaker set. It is the thing I miss most on my return to the East.



There appears to be a shortage of housing accommodation all over the world. I left it in the East and found the problem just as acute in the West. The difficulty of retaining sufficient servants to keep in order a big country house has caused many of these places to be virtually abandoned. Their owners have taken flats in London, so that now it is extremely difficult to secure reasonable accommodation in the residential portions of the city, or in the suburbs. Houses have been subdivided, and each tenant is expected to pay for his portion of the house more than the entire rent of the whole place. Basement cellars, often damp and comfortless, which in other days were used for storing empty trunks and rubbish, are now cleaned up and let at high rents as "self-contained flats." My search for a flat brought me into contact with many such places, and I secured one finally, which was far from suitable, only by buying the entire contents at the owner's valuation. Even so I was considered extremely lucky.

Nothing is more noticeable in England to-day than the grip which the cinema has throughout the country. The old suburban theatre has almost disappeared, throttled out of existence by its speechless competitor. So it is in the West End. The Tivoli is gone and in its place is a cinema; the Oxford music-hall has been pulled down, and the Empire itself is even now being converted into a picture palace. Only the Coliseum, the Alhambra, and the Holborn Empire remain to show the visitor to the West End what London can offer in the way of genuine variety entertainment.

Yet for all that there are in Greater London to-day 482 theatres, music-halls and cinemas (it is almost unnecessary to add that most of these are cinemas), there are 122 golf courses, 350 hard tennis courts, 65 centres of public dancing, 170 royal, ecclesiastical and other buildings open to the public, 827 restaurants to suit every purse, and thirty miles of shops.

Not such a bad list; and those who may think of



spending most of their leave in London might do far worse, as the old city can still offer an array of attractions unequalled in the world.

But post-war England, and especially London, as a place of permanent residence is a much less attractive proposition. You find many things which are unexpected and unwelcome. There is the present high cost of living—fully 80 per cent. higher than it was ten years ago—and very high taxation. You notice the absence of the half-penny daily and evening newspapers; the depreciated purchasing power of the nimble penny; the increased postal, telegraph and railway rates; also the unrest in the ranks of labour generally, with its attendant strikes, constantly occurring in this, that or the other industry. Business men who are apparently prosperous tell you that they are not making any money at all. They are living on their capital.

Worst of all is the appalling number of men and women willing, but unable, to find employment. The number is much greater than official figures indicate, and they are bad enough in all conscience, hovering as they do, month after month, around the $1\frac{1}{4}$ million mark. These official figures represent only registered unemployed. And the number of men who are tramping the streets in search of work who yet do not come into this category must be very great indeed.

On the other hand you cannot help noticing the increased amount of spending which goes on, the greatly enlarged advertising space occupied in newspapers and magazines, the numberless gigantic advertisement hoardings, and the many electrical advertising devices which brighten the streets at night. Then there are those really astonishing figures from the Motor Show of 1926, where, despite an increased admission fee, Olympia was packed every day of the Show, and the number of cars sold easily broke all previous records.

It is all very perplexing to the Englishman newly returned from overseas.



Yet, social and political unrest notwithstanding, there still remains in the United Kingdom a solid background of unshakable tradition; the heart of the Empire is sound.

London is still the most fascinating of cities; it is good to feel you are at the hub of the universe once more. Its people are the most human, and the Cockney remains the most hardy and cheerful of men. Why, the very wax models in the shop windows seem in these days to be full of life!

The call of the East is forgotten in the glory of home-coming, but if you have been East of Suez sufficiently long you will hear the call again, sooner or later. Inevitably you will miss the sun in its full splendour, soon you will sicken of the almost endless rain and chilly cold. The constraint of an enforced suburban life will make you chafe your bonds, and at the call you will break away once more.

Thus in the end the East will get you, even as it has me.

THE END

KOB